

A Special Advertising Section from Mercury Tracer

RACECAR DRIVER LYN ST. JAMES

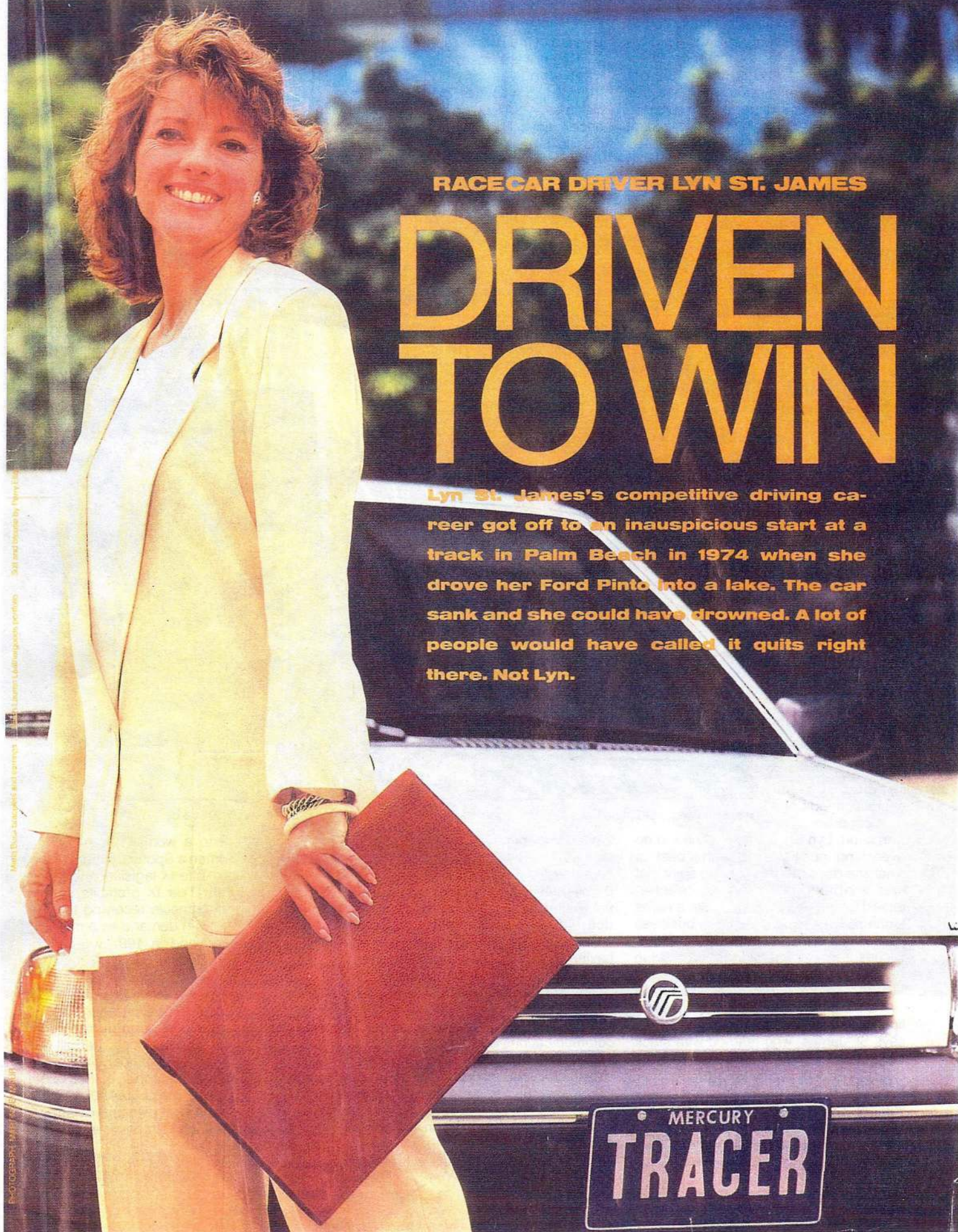
DRIVEN TO WIN

Lyn St. James's competitive driving career got off to an inauspicious start at a track in Palm Beach in 1974 when she drove her Ford Pinto into a lake. The car sank and she could have drowned. A lot of people would have called it quits right there. Not Lyn.

Styl and layout by Anne H.

Mercury Tracer and Lyn St. James's adventures

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARY K.



Since then, she has learned not only how to swim but how to drive fast without crashing. And on those rare occasions when she has crashed—at Riverside (Calif.) International Raceway in April, 1986, for example, where her car was rear-ended at 180 miles per hour—she has learned how to crawl through a wall of flames to survive. She knows what it's like to be tormented by failure. She also knows what it's like to win a GTO race all by herself at historic Watkins Glen—the first and only time a woman driver has ever done so in an IMSA GT (International Motor Sports Association) event—and yet have none of her male crew members show up in the victory lane to offer congratulations or douse her with champagne. She has pitched in and gotten her hands dirty in the pit area, while somehow keeping her fingernails nice enough to pass for those of a successful businesswoman—which she is away from the track. And in an effort to diminish whatever physical discrepancies exist between her and her male competitors, she has entered into a rigorous physical fitness program tailored to the specific bio-mechanical needs of a race car driver.

In short, Lyn St. James has tried to do everything possible to be the best at what she does. It's this fighting spirit that has enabled this ex-piano teacher turned Grand Prix driver to make a name for herself in a male-dominated business where women customarily make sandwiches and wait with fingers crossed in campers for their husbands or boy-friends to return from racing.

"I am the kind of person who, if I see a light at the end of the tunnel, I go for it," says St. James, who teamed with stock car great Bill Elliott to win this year's 24 Hours of Daytona, driving a production-based Ford Mustang. St. James's victory was her fourth shared or solo win in the last 17 months on the IMSA GTO circuit. No other American woman has ever achieved that degree of success at such

a high level of auto racing, according to Mark Raffaui, vice president and chief steward of the IMSA.

"There were many times last year when Lyn was driving and people thought it was her co-driver, Pete Halsmer—you couldn't tell the difference," says Raffaui. "Ability-wise, Lyn can do it."

According to Raffaui, the only thing separating St. James from a group of about a dozen male drivers who dominate the premier IMSA circuit, GTP (which features specially built, one-of-a-kind prototype cars), is the fact that week after week these drivers follow their cars

for "jumping on planes the way other people pick up the telephone." This affinity for travel comes in handy in her role as a consumer advisor and spokesperson for the Ford Motor Company and Lincoln-Mercury. She'll visit more than 30 cities in this capacity in 1987. And when she speaks about the safety and engineering features built into cars like the Mercury Tracer, she knows what she's talking about because she serves as a test driver for Ford and Lincoln-Mercury.

Speaking out on behalf of women is also something St. James does regularly, whether she's suggesting ways for Ford engineers to tailor the width of the



Watkins Glen, 1985: Lyn becomes the first and only woman driver to win an IMSA GTO race by herself.

around the country, testing and fine-tuning both the vehicles and their own skills. Whereas St. James goes home to Fort Lauderdale between races and tends to the half-dozen other professional endeavors which pay her bills.

To begin with, she is an entrepreneur, having owned and operated Autodyne, a wholesale automotive parts supply company in Fort Lauderdale, since 1974. This makes her so conversant in things automotive that it provides a natural communications link with men in the racing business—and with men at her local fitness club who might strike up a conversation with her because of the way she looks in a leotard, but who end up enthralled with her advice on torsion bars and McPherson struts.

St. James says she has a reputation

steering wheel to a woman's frame or helping the Women's Sports Foundation lobby to restore Title IX legislation to its original strength (Title IX prohibits sex discrimination in schools receiving federal funds). She is in demand as a motivational speaker, and in 1987 will address five national women's conventions, including Women in Communications and the Society of Women Engineers.

St. James doesn't have an agent, so she handles all these arrangements, plus auto show appearances, herself. And as recently as 1983, before she became a full-fledged member of Ford's factory racing team, she not only did the driving but acted as her own team manager—a catch-all job with never-ending headaches of its own.

This regimen explains why Raffaui

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feels St. James may need to narrow her focus slightly if she is to mount a challenge for the driver's championship in IMSA's GTO class. St. James, who radiates positivism in a tactful, bright-eyed, friendly package, says she knows she's spread too thin, but maintains she can win the GTO title anyway. That would probably vault her back into GTP competition, where she has driven before and would like to compete again. In GTP, she would get to drive a more exotic breed of race car and have a shot at beating such well-known racing names as A.J. Foyt, Danny Sullivan and Al Unser Jr.

"My immediate goal is to win the driver's championship in GTO, and this is my year to do it," says St. James. "I have the equipment, the team and the support of the Ford racing program behind me. I've waited a long time for this opportunity."

Almost anyone who knew Lyn as Evelyn Cornwall, the introverted only child of a Willoughby, Ohio sheet metal worker and his wife, would have a hard time believing who she is today.

"I grew up literally and figuratively on the wrong side of the tracks," says Lyn, who led such a sheltered life as a child that she not only couldn't swim, she couldn't ride a bicycle either. "There were only four other houses in the area and I stayed indoors a lot and played the piano. My dad worked such long hours that I don't have many memories of him. My mother, who had a polio-like disease as a child, is basically shy, too."

"Lyn was so shy she bordered on being afraid of people, and she had to work harder at sports than other people because she didn't have much coordination," recalls Karlene Pinkney, a classmate of Lyn's at The Andrews School for girls who remains her closest friend today.

"I was self-conscious all through grade school," Lyn recalls. "I didn't have many friends, I never felt good about my looks, and I wasn't one of those girls who wants to spend an hour and a half getting dressed in the morning to look my best. If there was any person I wanted to be like, it was my piano teacher, who taught me for 13 years. She was a beautiful human being, she dressed perfectly and she was always sweet."

Intimidated by the prospect of attending public school and having to interact with a lot of strangers, Lyn filled out the Andrews School application herself and didn't tell her mother until she was accepted. Ironically, the decision to attend an all-girl school is what eventually led to Lyn becoming a race car driver.

"Andrews taught me how to live with other kids," she recalls. "and it was my friend Karlene who got me involved in sports. I was captain of the field hockey team and I also played basketball, volleyball and tennis. In public high school, all I could have been was a cheerleader, and I wouldn't have made the cheerleader squad. Sports taught me that just because things aren't going right doesn't mean people are picking on you. I never could have related with my all-male racing teams if I hadn't learned that."

Lyn didn't date in high school. But unlikely as it may sound, she did hang around with a group of public school kids who liked drag racing, and they began to bring her out of her shell. Actually, she had always been interested in cars, and one night out at the local strip she got up enough nerve to climb into one of the dragsters and race it. She still has the trophy in her Fort Lauderdale office.

In 1963, Lyn's drag racing friends decided to attend the Indianapolis 500. Lyn begged her parents to let her go,

too, and her mother said it was okay as long as she could go along as chaperone.

"The Indy 500 was the most incredible experience I've ever had," says Lyn. "I was absolutely mesmerized by the whole thing. They wouldn't let me into Gasoline Alley [the pit and garage area] because women weren't allowed there in those days. But I got to go to the drivers' meeting, which was open to the public. I saw A. J. Foyt and Mario Andretti. I never in a million years thought I'd be doing what they did. There just wasn't any point of reference for me. I was a girl. I loved that whole racing scene more than you could imagine, but there were no women racing there."

Twenty years later, Lyn was driving on the same team with Foyt at Daytona.

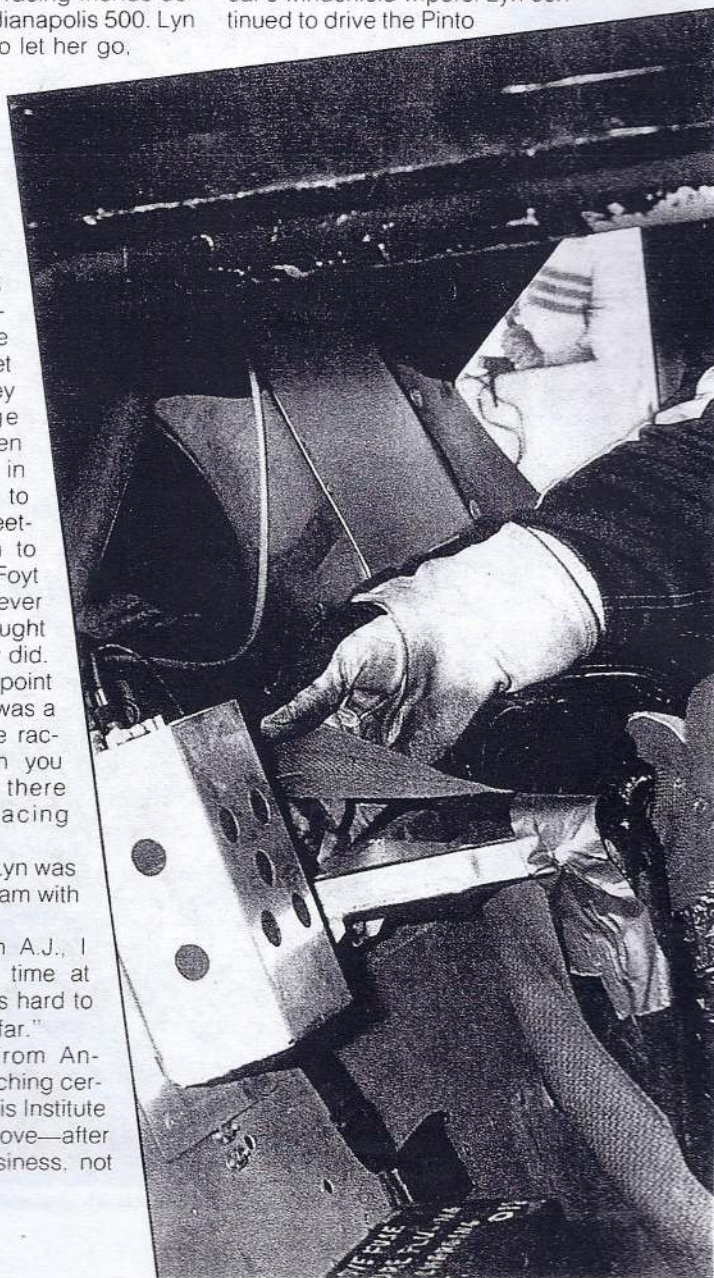
"When I raced with A.J., I thought back to that time at Indy," she says. "It was hard to believe I had come so far."

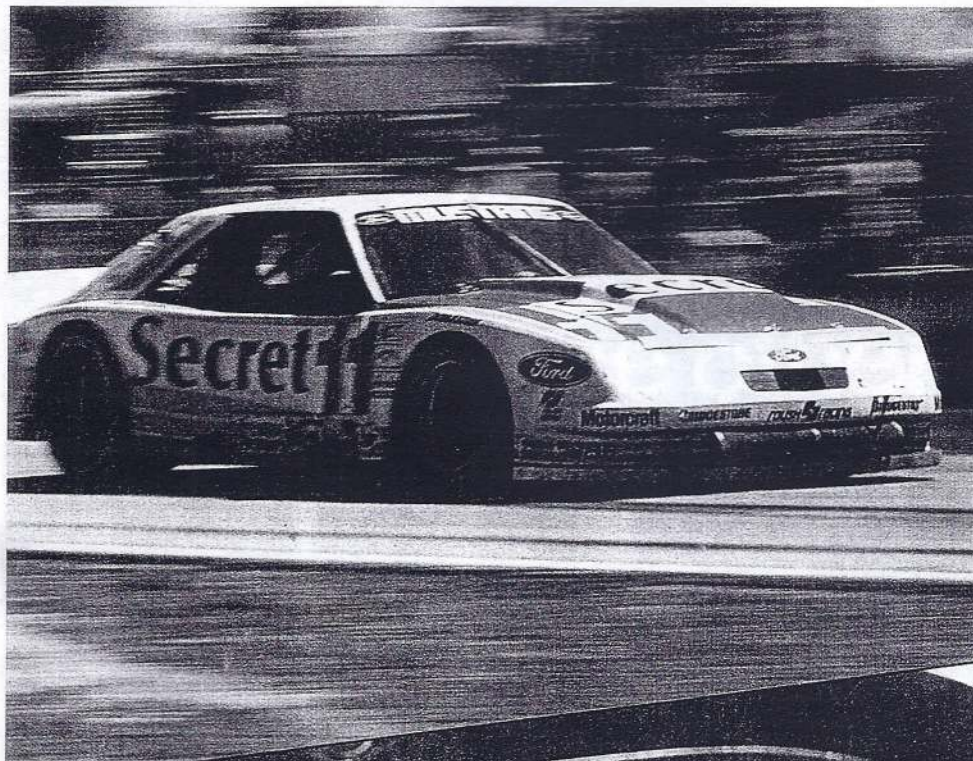
After graduating from Andrews, Lyn got her teaching certificate from the St. Louis Institute of Music. But her first love—after cars, that is—was business, not

piano. She took a job as a secretary with U.S. Steel in Cleveland, hoping to work her way up the corporate ladder. She supplemented her income by giving piano lessons to children.

In 1970, Lyn moved to Florida and married John Carusso, with whom she shared several interests—he owned an electronics firm where she could apply her business skills, and they were both crazy about cars. However, she was *not* crazy about being called "Mrs. Carusso" and she had never liked her maiden name, Cornwall. One night, while watching actress Susan Saint James on "McMillan & Wife" on TV, she suddenly blurted out, "That's it! That's my new name." From then on, she has been known as Lyn St. James.

Lyn's first racing car was the Pinto that got dunked in the lake. After that soggy mishap, it took 36 hours in a 250-degree oven just to dry the motor that ran the car's windshield wipers. Lyn continued to drive the Pinto





in Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) competition until 1977, eventually winning the Florida regional championship in the showroom stock class. In 1978, she drove a Cosworth-Vega and was runner-up in Southeast SCCA competition, then co-drove her husband's Corvette in the 12 Hours of Sebring.

If Lyn seems to have more than her share of self-confidence, it may stem from the fact that in her very first professional race, at Road Atlanta in 1979, she came within .79 of a second of winning a Kelly American Challenge competition. It was seven more years before a woman would succeed in doing so. At the end of 1979, Lyn and her husband divorced, and she went ahead with her racing career alone. In 1981, driving a Mercury Capri, she climbed all the way up to fifth place in the Kelly point standings for the year. That was an especially good finish, considering she was working with her fourth crew in two years.

Lyn had to finance her cars herself, look for sponsorship on a race-to-race basis and expend a lot of energies as team manager. In contrast, many of the men who were beating her on the racetrack merely had to show up and drive. When 1982 turned out to be a disastrous year, Lyn wondered whether the odds of a woman making it in racing were too high for her to overcome.

"In my frustration, I remember thinking I was a total failure," she says. "You know, men can just be sitting around having a beer together, and one of them is a race car driver and the other is a race car owner and the



Spring, 1987:
Strapped in and ready to race at Sebring, Fla. Top: Sizzling down the straightaway in her production-based Mustang.

PHOTOGRAPHS GEOFFREY HEWITT

next thing you know the owner says to the driver, 'Hey, I want you to drive my car.' That chemistry, that almost indescribable thing that men have is pretty damn tough for a woman driver to recreate."

But in the depths of her despair, Lyn happened to read a magazine article on famed stock car driver Bobby Allison. It made her feel better immediately.

"The article was about Bobby winning the NASCAR driving championship, and in it he said that in 22 years of racing he had gone through 17 different racing teams," says Lyn. "It made me realize that maybe this was the way the game was played, and that I wasn't the one at fault."

Lyn turned to IMSA GTP racing in 1984, and was named "Rookie of the Year" by AutoWeek. But it was in 1985, with sponsorship from Ford for ten IMSA GTO races, that her career really took off. With her team she won three races, and the victory she'll never forget is the historic one she won all by herself at Watkins Glen, N.Y., when she refused to get out of the car and let her co-driver finish the 500-kilometer race.

"I wasn't tired and I didn't need relief," Lyn recalls. "So when I came into the pits to refuel, change tires and switch drivers, I just stared at my crew chief, Charlie Selix, and didn't move. My co-driver, Whitney Ganz, was standing there trying to help me get unstrapped, but I never looked at him. I just kept staring at Charlie, and then I shook my head no. Charlie never flinched and off I went."

When Lyn got the checkered flag, the news media surrounded her. But she looked in vain for someone from her crew. They had been as sharp as ever during the latter stages of the race, but didn't appear in the victory circle. Later, Ganz took Lyn aside and told her he would have done the same thing if he'd been in her shoes.

"Lyn never asked for respect; she

went out and earned it on the track," says Emory Donaldson, a driver who has known her since 1974. "She started out slower than some other drivers, but in the end she went faster. You put her in a first-rate car and she's going to win."

The "07" necklace Lyn wears is dedicated to the No. 07 Ford Probe, an 850-horsepower research vehicle in which she set her Women's Closed Course Speed Record of 204.223 miles per hour. The record run took place at the Alabama International Motor Speedway in

Lyn felt as though "an elephant had put his foot on the car." It was then she realized she needed to get involved in a strength and conditioning program. Otherwise, everything she had worked for might wither away for want of muscle.

Driving a race car may be a sedentary enterprise, but so is flying a jet fighter—and nobody gets to be Top Gun in either without being in excellent shape. The G forces brought on by accelerating from, say, 60 to 150 miles per hour in a stretch of only 500 yards put an incredible strain on a driver's head and neck. So do the side forces that build up on long radius turns at speeds approaching 200 miles per hour on high-banked tracks. Anybody who uses a manual transmission can appreciate what it's like for a race car driver to have to shift hundreds or even thousands of times in a race. Throw in cockpit temperatures that can reach 140 degrees and pile all that on top of the emotional pressure of trying to outmaneuver and outdistance 70 of the fastest land vehicles in the world, and you have some idea of



Lyn arrives at her health club for a workout specially tailored to help her withstand the grueling pressures of racecar driving.

November, 1985. There were times on the backstretch that day when Lyn hit 215 m.p.h.

"At that speed, you are driving the car at its absolute limits," says Lyn. "Your visual reference points come up so much quicker. I felt like I was threading a needle. I wasn't frightened, but I can tell you it was eerie. At those speed levels, the car could just take over. That's where my own aggressiveness comes in."

When Lyn tested the Probe again prior to driving it on the 1986 IMSA circuit, she was shocked at how differently it handled with racing "ground effects" added to enhance traction. In Alabama, on an empty track, the Probe had been set up to do everything but fly. Now, instead of feeling like she was threading a needle,

why race car drivers have to think of themselves as athletes if they are to succeed on the circuit.

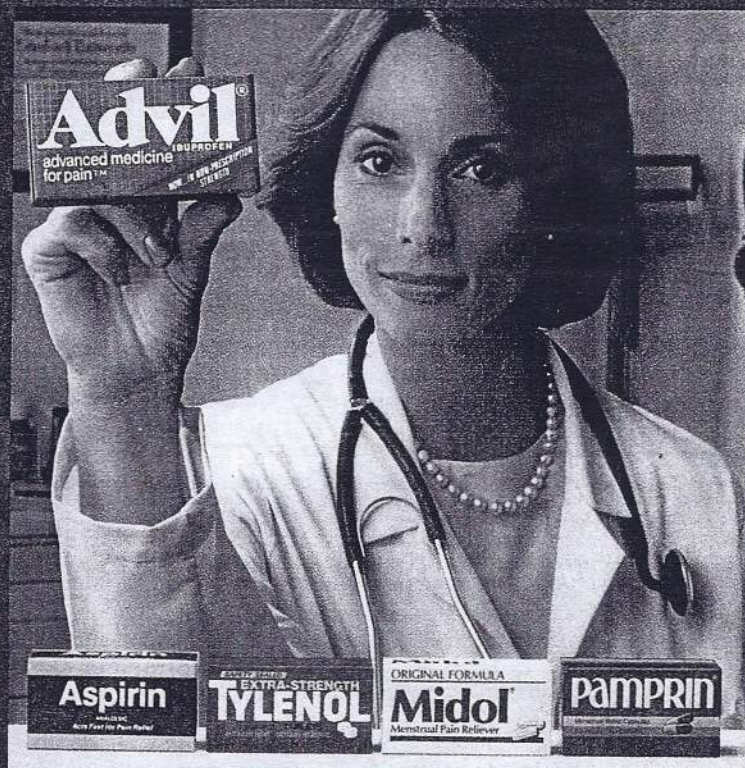
Lyn knows that now, but there was a time when she didn't.

"Before I tested the Probe in February, 1986, I was into what I would call a maintenance program," she says. "I'd run one or two miles a couple of times a week and do a little Nautilus, but I didn't feel it was necessary to do anything out of the ordinary. I'd work out when I felt guilty or when I had time. Then, suddenly I knew I had to get much more powerful to be able to handle the car the way I wanted to."

Lyn is 5'6", weighs 125 pounds, plays tennis and is slim and attractive by anyone's standards. Yet when she was first

PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ST. AMOUR
Sweatshirt, sweatpants and sneakers by The Gap

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evaluated by exercise physiologist Mark Jones at the Sports and Fitness Clinic in Lauderdale-By-The-Sea, she was nowhere near as fit as she could be. Her body fat content registered 26.2 percent, which was near average. Her aerobic capacity was 34.5 milliliters of oxygen per kilogram of body weight per minute—also about average. Jones told her he could get her into much better shape.

What Jones prescribed, after extensive interviews with Lyn and with several drivers at last year's Miami Grand Prix, was a combination of Nautilus and free weight work (to increase Lyn's upper and lower body strength and muscular endurance), plus a cardiovascular program designed to improve her overall health and make her stronger at the end of a race.

In creating the specifics of Lyn's overall fitness program, Jones also had to take two more things into consideration: her personality, which she describes as workaholic, and her attention span, which she admits is short—she tends to wander into boredom if something fast or exciting isn't happening to her most of the time.

"I am not a recreational fitness person," she says. "I'm very results-oriented in everything I do. I don't consider driving a race car all that dangerous. What I do consider dangerous is peddling an exercise bicycle for 30 minutes at a time with nothing else to do."

According to Lyn's definition, nothing in the routine Jones has designed for her is dangerous. But by the same token, no part of it could be considered particularly genteel or languorous, either.

After a 10-minute stretching and warmup period, Lyn and her personal exercise coach, Nick Georgette, embark on a 14-station strength routine, followed by a six-station aerobic workout, followed by 10 minutes of cool-down and stretching when the body's muscles are at their most flexible. The entire program takes roughly one hour and 15 minutes including a five-minute break between the strength and aerobic phases.

Station No. 1, the Nautilus hip-and-back machine, is designed to strengthen Lyn's lower back and the buttocks area, which is crucial in shifting her Mustang's five-speed transmission. From there, Lyn moves to Station No. 2, the Nautilus compound-leg machine.

The primary focus here is the quadriceps (the front thigh muscles), which are also involved in shifting. "We put enough resistance on her so she'll reach muscular failure somewhere between 40-70 seconds," says Jones. With no break in between, Lyn changes leg positions and does a second thigh-straining movement—but since her quadriceps are already exhausted, she has to recruit

other muscles, in this case the buttocks, to help.

"This combination is not for the everyday person," says Jones. "This is for people who are trying to build serious muscle."

"This is about as bad as it gets," says Lyn, "because the last thing the front of the thighs want to do after the first part is more work."

"But they have to!" says Nick, whose favorite remonstrance to his pupil is, "You want to suffer here or on the track?"

Lyn's next stop is Station No. 3, the Nautilus leg curl machine, which targets her hamstrings, or back-of-thigh muscles. Station No. 4, the abductor-adductor machine, is a feminine body shaper which helps slim the outer hip and the inner thigh. Station No. 5, which includes both the Nautilus rowing torso machine and its pre-exhauster, the parallel grip pull-down, is designed to isolate and exhaust the upper-body muscle groups that are subject to overuse when a race car driver has to extend her arms to a steering wheel.

"My basic attitude here is belligerence," says Lyn, "but when it really gets hard I close my eyes and pretend I'm sitting in the race car. Mental imagery really helps."

"Ninety-nine percent of people will quit an exercise before they get the full benefit out of it, if you let them," says Jones. "Lyn's workout is a progressive routine. We're constantly overloading her body, stimulating it to change and get stronger."

At Stations No. 6 and No. 8, the incline dumbbell press and the close-grip bench press, Lyn uses free weights—a pair of 15-pound dumbbells and a 45-pound Olympic bar—to target the pectorals, the front deltoids and the triceps in the back of the arms.

"Lyn has had a strength increase of 100 percent in some areas and 60 percent overall in a year's time," says Jones. She has also shown marked improvement on Station No. 7, the lateral shoulder raises.

Station Nos. 9-14 target Lyn's biceps, her triceps again, her lower back again, her wrists, which get weak and sluggish after too much shifting, her abdomen and, finally, her calves. Her aerobics program includes step-ups on a 14-inch-high platform, an upper body ergometer (an exercise bike for the upper body), a stationary bike, a treadmill, and a cross-country ski machine.

"Getting involved in fitness has made me more aware of the physical elements that are important in racing," says Lyn. "Sometimes I think I have an advantage over other drivers because I have what I'd call a higher focus. But I don't want to give that advantage away because I'm not strong enough."

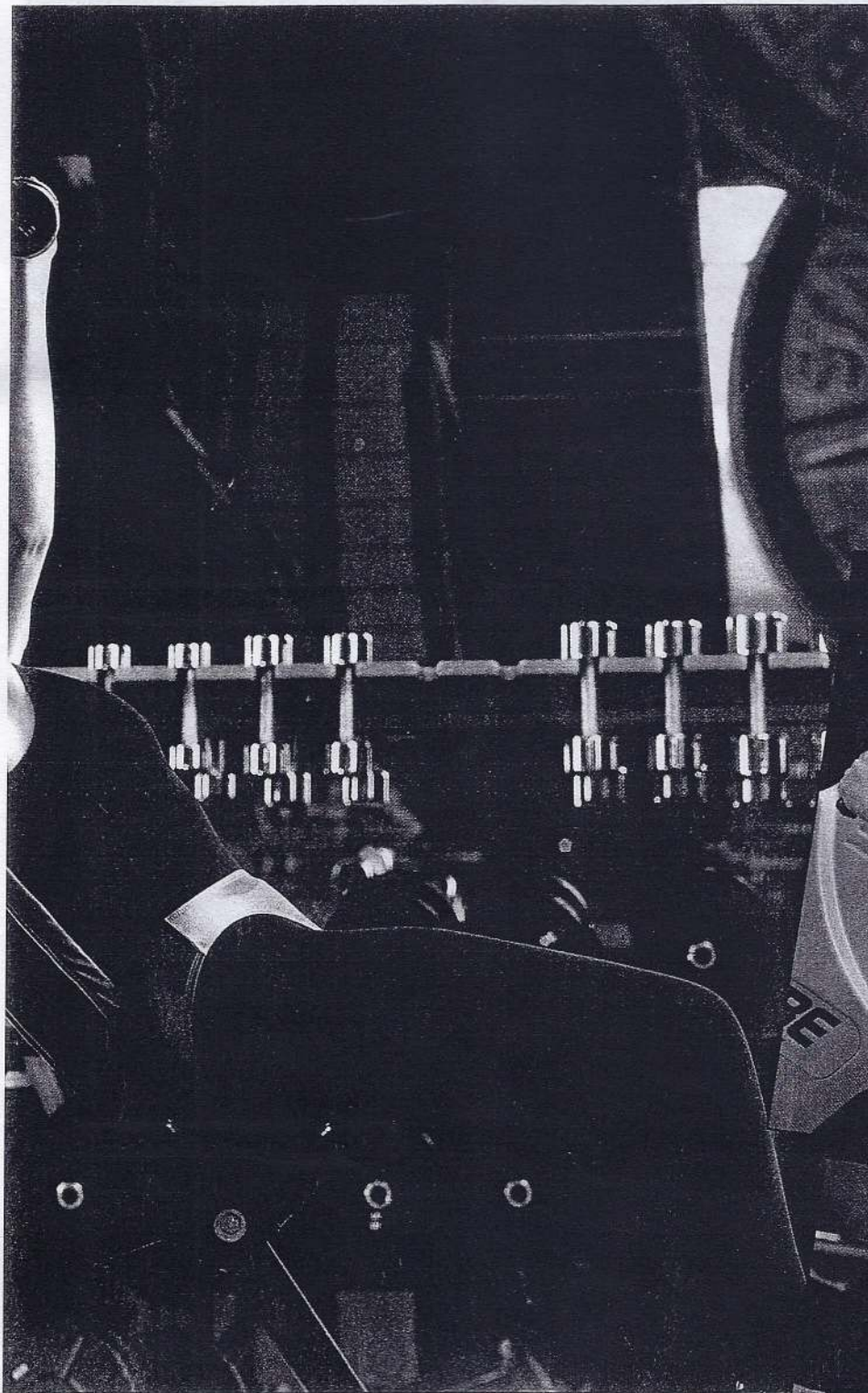
Fitness Section Photographed at the Sports and Fitness Clinic, Lauderdale By the Sea, Florida

PHOTOGRAPHS: MARTIN SEYMOUR HAIR AND MAKE-UP: TIMOTHY METZ STYLIST: ROSEMARY CORDERI



Lyn St. James is not the offspring of a racing star. She didn't buy her way into the sport, either. On the contrary, she had to crawl out of a lake and through fire just to get to where she is today.

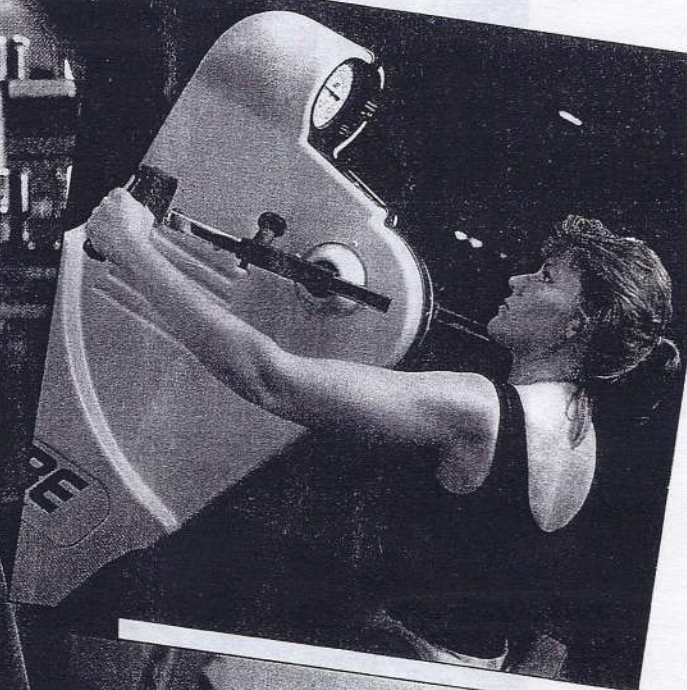
And where is that? Well, consider that Janet Guthrie, who gained a lot of attention by racing in the Indianapolis 500



sports, St. James competes against the best men in her field every time she climbs into her race car. "I've talked to a lot of male drivers who say, 'Lyn I give you credit. I couldn't do what you do.' I was willing to take the risk because I saw no other alternative in order to have a career," she says.

"Experiencing success and control in a race car has made me realize that I had capabilities and power as an individual—and not just all by myself, but as graded against other people of equal or greater strength. That gave me a sense of confidence I never had before. That's why I think auto racing is so special."

Lyn's overall fitness goals: more upper-body strength, cardiovascular endurance. Left: the incline dumbbell press. Below: the upper-body ergometer. Bottom: the Nautilus compound-leg machine.



from 1977-79, hasn't been able to qualify there since. France's Michelle Mouton was a world-class rally driver and once held the record for the Pike's Peak hill climb. But, like Guthrie, she never reached higher ground. South Africa's Desiré Wilson and Italy's Lella Lombardi have both won prestigious international races, but racing opportunities for women in Europe are much more numerous than in the U.S. That leaves three Ameri-

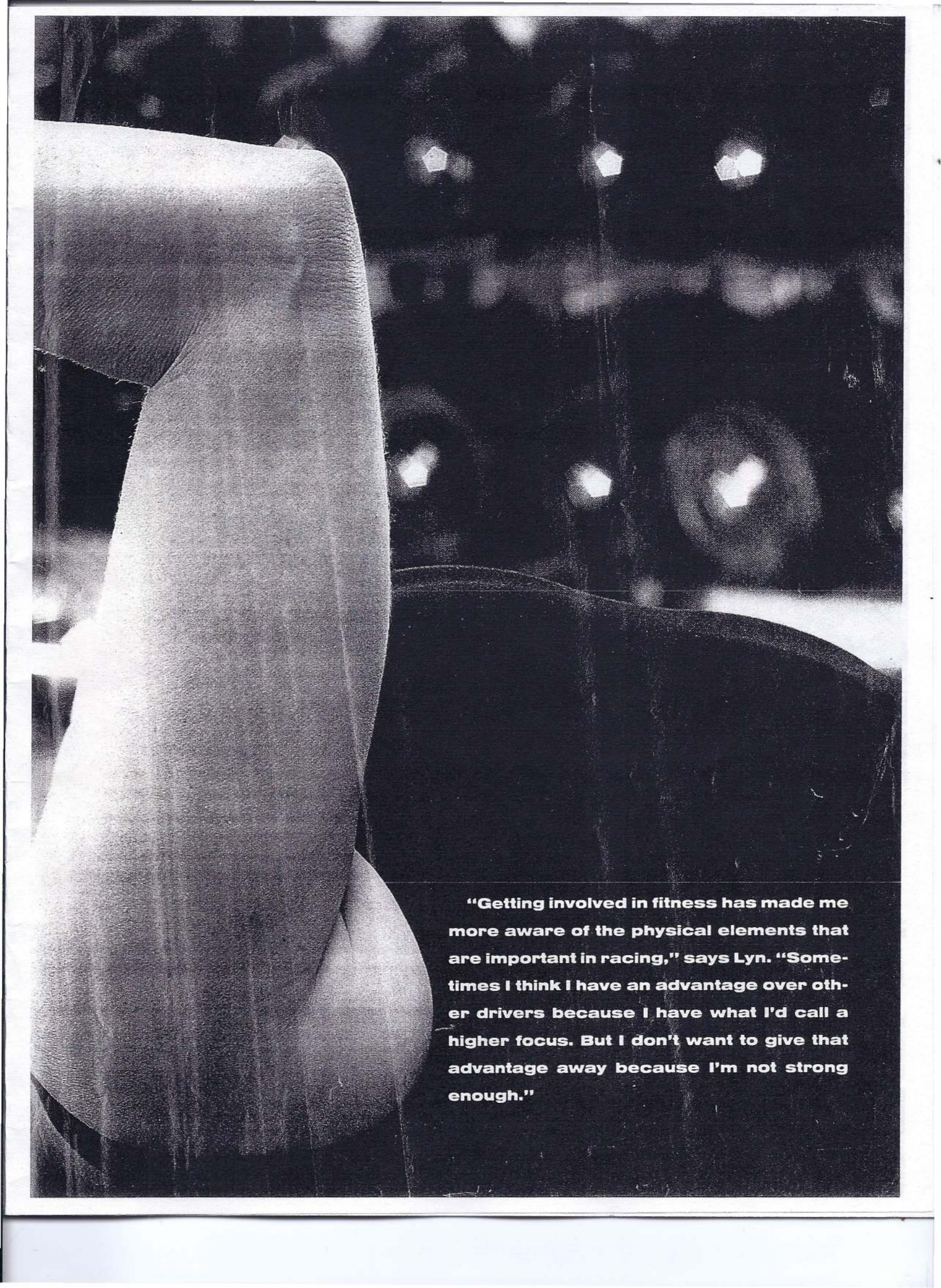
can women drivers to reckon with: Patty Moise, who in 1986 became the first woman to win a race in the Kelly American Challenge series; Robin McCall-Dallenbach, who finished second in a Kelly American Challenge race in 1986; and St. James.

Unlike professional women athletes in other

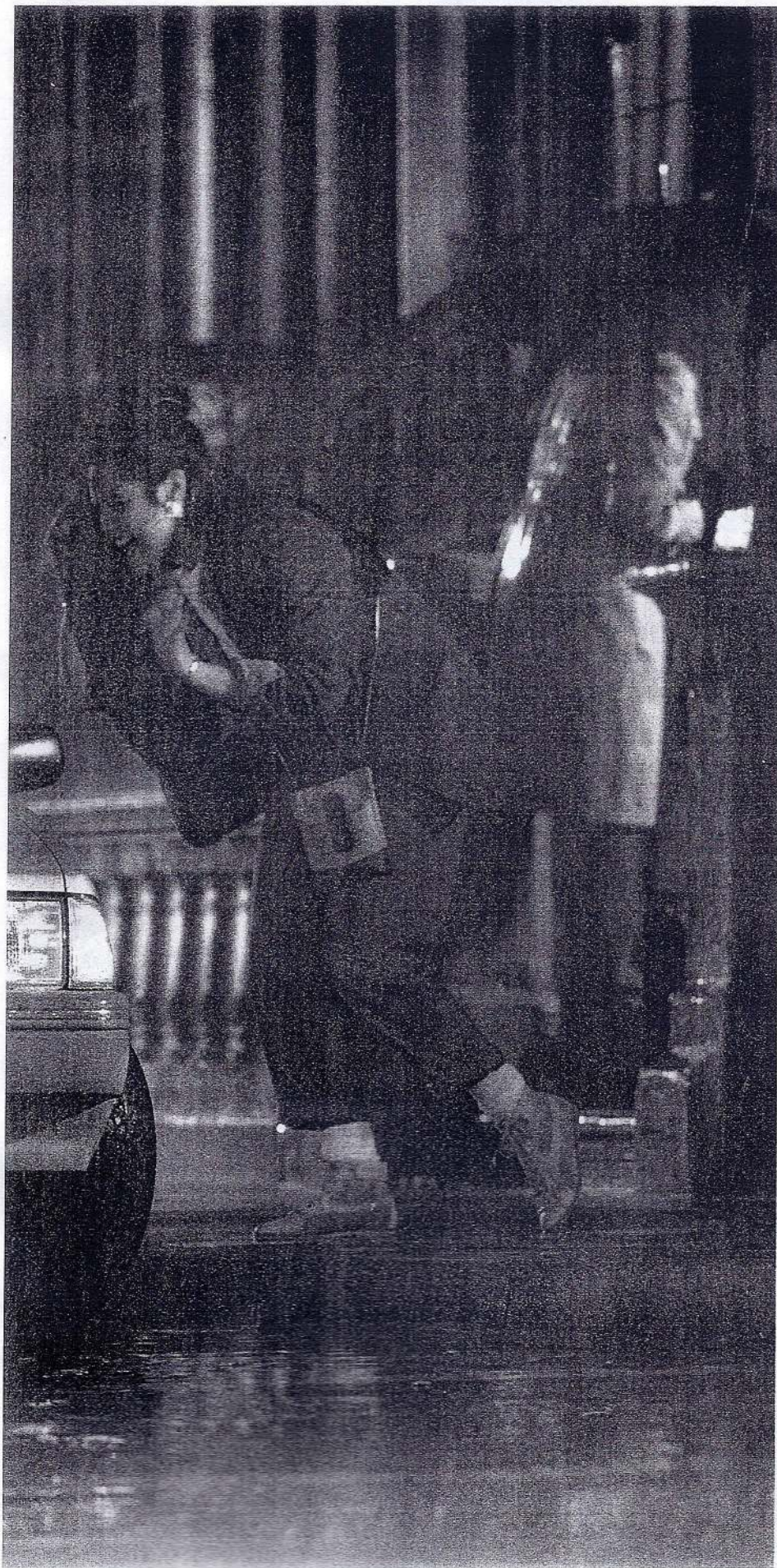
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