



Installation of the quarter-of-a-million dollar 5 axis router

Advanced Composite Products in Trans Am for the Long Haul

By
Bob Koveleski

Far and in between are the times you meet someone with integrity and the passion for racing as Kerry Hitt, especially in an environment so densely populated by frauds. In this sport Kerry has become both a fierce competitor and innovator. My memory was jogged as I was writing his article, thinking about the first time I met him. For that, I needed to go way back to the fall of 1967 at the Duryea hill climb in Northeastern Pennsylvania. "Oscar" (my dad) was at the time, racing a Chevy powered Cooper Monaco and Kerry, was driving an early 60's stick-

Today, Advanced Composite Products is highly regarded worldwide as a source for specialty products made from composite materials.

axle Corvette. In those days it was easy to make friends with competitors at racing events, especially between those with the common trait of running the same brand of engines. For guys racing in the Northeast then, running hill climbs was very popular and one of the best ways to tune-up one's driving skills. There's nothing that matches the excitement of big hardwood trees flying by on both sides of a very steep, narrow and windy road while riding on the back of a dragon at 100+plus MPH.

I wasn't quite sure what Kerry did at the time, but not long after we published our first Auto World motorsport catalog, Kerry and his company,

Advanced Fiberglass Industries known later as Advanced Composite Products (ACP) quickly became a good source and supplier. As a motorsport and racing accessories catalog house, we soon found ourselves selling the hell out of fiberglass spoilers and fender flares. This is because back then, O.E.M's were slow (or indifferent) to incorporate that "sporty" look into body styling and get it onto showroom floors. One day Kerry drove up from Harrisburg to our headquarters in Scranton to talk my dad into buying the fiberglass from him saying that he could make that stuff just as good or better than those "California boys", plus he was only 120 miles away

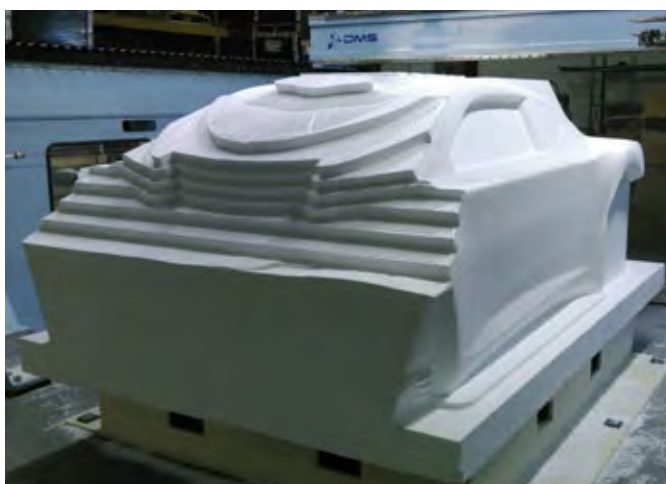


Whittling out the rear deck for the CTS-V

ACP in Trans Am for the Long Haul



5-axis router



2017 Camaro being cut from a block of foam on the 5 axis router

vs. 3,000 and the rest, as they say is history. Kerry will tell you he does not know how many hundreds of spoilers he made for Auto World but he will say that it helped finance his racing for several years. Along the way, Kerry also designed and built a lot of other neat stuff for motorsport, like a dual-shell fiberglass racing “cool” seat that was really trick. So trick, I remember selling a few of them to Jack Roush for his (then) Trans Am team. Hitt really got into the full swing of things when he designed and built IMSA approved bodywork for the Red Lobster sponsored BMW M1 racer. I remember arriving at Watkins Glen for the 6 hour with the team. As soon as we pulled the car out of the transporter, all of the BMW factory race team mechanics came over and were amazed to see how the Dzus fastened body panels on our privately entered M1 were all coming off in seconds. Over the weekend, we watched in amusement as the Germans looking like contortionists, were stretching the human form every which-way to reach certain mechanicals in their M1’s. By the next race the boys in Bavaria had done pretty much the same thing to their factory team cars.

Kerry’s ACP became so good at what they did they were contracted to build bodies for the great Bob Riley and his 5-liter Can Am cars and also designed and built bodywork for the championship winning under 2-liter Can Am car of Bertil Roos. ACP also became the exclusive body supplier for Al Holbert when he was running the Porsche 956 & 962 cars and also developed products for Penske racing and GM Performance & Motorsports. ACP was also famously responsible for the C3, C4, C5 and C6 Corvette racing bodywork for A production, B production, GT-1, World Challenge Series, IMSA and Trans Am.

Advanced Composite Products is one of the most highly efficient composite prototype and production facilities in the USA. With huge advancements over the years in dynamic automotive technology, Kerry has stepped up his game employing a team of uniquely skilled people and making considerable investments in digital programming and machinery. This technology includes incorporating a 3-D surfacing program that has unique scanning capabilities where individual custom parts or even

ACP in Trans Am for the Long Haul

complete bodywork can be digitally scanned and stored for future use. This data can then be used to build molds to reproduce bodywork for one-off or very rare cars that are still being used in (vintage) competition. The data is used to program a large 5-axis router which cuts precise patterns, the first step in a propriety mold making process.

ACP also uses a Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) program that evaluates aerodynamic flow. This CFD program offers maximum flexibility, enabling all the design work to be aerodynamically optimized prior to production taking place.

The impact of all this effort is the overwhelming approval of new body styles for Trans Am and other racing series. This allows savings to be passed directly to the racer and having been a racer himself, Kerry understands the financial burdens of racing first-hand.

While ACP has it's ground game covered, the company has also successfully procured government contracts to build Azimuth and elevation radar equipment housings used to guide and land aircraft on Navy carriers. And for the last ten years, ACP has been the sole source of supply for these radomes to the US Military.

Outside hill climbs, Kerry's racing included winning the SCCA northeast region championship in a B production Corvette. He started running SCCA Nationals in the mid-seventies and qualified for the runoffs at Road Atlanta several times. First, in a B production Corvette where he finished 6th. Later, driving a big-block Vette in A production. Kerry participated in many SCCA National races, winning scores of events and setting numerous records in every class he entered, several which are still standing today. Kerry also drove in numerous IMSA and GrandAm races and ran the Daytona 24 hour a half-dozen times. He competed in several 6-hour races at Watkins Glen, drove in the GrandAm series from 2000 through 2003 and drove to a 3rd place finish in the AGT class. Then in 2002, he won the Rolex driver championship. Kerry then semi-retired, raced vintage for a short while as he focused on growing his business. In 2013, he got back into pro-racing at the Sebring TransAm but still ran a limited schedule. In the 2014 TransAm season Kerry



Whittling out the rear deck for the CTS-V



Oscar Koveleski and Kerry Hitt



Kerry Hitt driving his #19 ACP 2016 TA CTS-V

ACP in Trans Am for the Long Haul

"Kerry is one of the most trustworthy persons I have ever met. He's never made a promise he couldn't keep and has more talent in a single finger than most people have in their entire bodies."
~Oscar Koveleski

finished 4th in points. Then he finished 6th in points in both 2015 and 2016 in TransAm.

Just last year, Jere Stahl of Stahl headers retired after 50 years of supplying performance exhaust headers to the racing industry. ACP purchased Stahl's manufacturing equipment and hired Greg Stump, Stahl's lead fabricator of 28 years to form ACP/ Stahl Headers. ACP will continue the tradition of producing top quality custom high performance exhaust systems to racers of all types.

Today, Advanced Composite Products is highly regarded worldwide as a source for specialty products made from composite materials. Currently, ACP is building lightweight composite bodies including; Corvette, Cadillac CTS-V, and Mustang. This year, ACP is releasing brand new Camaro and Challenger bodies for Trans Am. Also, to expand ACP



2017 ACP Camaro being cut on the 5 axis router

ACP in Trans Am for the Long Haul

to include other specialty products and services for the racing industry, Kerry hired Ray Kaufman, a long time racer who taught racecar chassis design and fabrication at Wyotech. Together they are developing ACP/Motorsports into a full service fabrication, race prep and race car restoration facility. So, beginning this year, ACP/Motorsports is offering trackside support and maintenance at Trans Am and SVRA events.

At 70 years young, Kerry's (getaway) plans always include helping his lovely wife Jeanne, a retired Veterinarian and an equally accomplished equestrian, on their horse farm in Wellington, Florida.

In talking with Oscar, who has engaged Kerry in multiple design projects during the last forty years -"Kerry is one of the most trustworthy persons I have ever met. He's never made a promise he couldn't keep and has more talent in a single finger than most people have in their entire bodies." **T**



Kerry Hitt driving his #19 ACP 2016 TA CTS-V

Trans Am BY



To see the latest event results, team information, news, schedules, and general information about the Trans Am Racing Series, go to:

GoTransAm.com

It is the website for America's Road Racing Series.