



Targa Newfoundland 2009/09/13 - This was sent to TeamVDG by Jud's son, Iain. As the message was read out to the team after dinner, laughter, tears and chuckles resulted as a much needed release for the anticipation of the upcoming race.

"This is a message to all Targa Newfoundland competitors with a podium finish in mind. There are three places to stand on the tower, but only two are available; and if you want to stand at the top you'll have to outperform team VDG and Brutus-a 1967 Acadian Canso Sport Coupe."

Don't let appearances fool you; this is not your Dad's Nova; it's actually my Dad's Nova... but I digress... Designed by General Motors as a low buck commuter compact, Jud and his family of designers have transformed his shoebox Chevy into the rarest of animals: A tarmac demon that feasts on a steady diet of hairpins, blind crests, and stretches of potholed pavement.

Every year the blue beast gets a little more scary and a little more angry. Every inch of the car has had attention. Sometimes to improve, sometimes to correct problems that said improvements caused. Either way there can be no mistake that this car is built with a singular purpose; to win against all odds. In the pre-Targa development years the car was once mistaken by a marshal at Shannonville as "A drag racer that wandered onto the drag strip." "No...that's just Jud," was the immediate reply.

The best finishing record seems bittersweet when it does not include a win, though you wouldn't know when you talk to the team. Where most would walk away, the family of Team VDG returns with renewed conviction every year. They learn from everything; what to change, what to keep, what was skill, and what was just luck; good or bad.

With machinists and fabricators in the family it is easy to assume that the marketing master Jud Buchanan employed others to build his car; that would be foolhardy. You're also missing the best mystery of all; behind the stern demeanour of Mr. Buchanan Marketing Consultant is a hardcore hot-rodder. I can remember a speechless team of rally mechanics marvelling as their "factory marketing guy" stepped in to fill the role of service crew when they were short handed. "I had no idea your Dad was such a car guy," they said to me. "Ironically," I said, "he doesn't advertise that very much."

The choice of modifications, parts, and adjustments are all a result of Jud's knowledge, and his humility. He knows who to ask when he needs advice and has a very extensive automotive engineering library. It has been put to good use and no issue has gone unaddressed. When more suspension travel was

needed, Jud figured out how to make it happen. When less weight in the rear was needed, he grabbed a hole saw and went to work.

But when the going got tough, the tough called the experts. The machinist dad, the welder brother, the parts specialist son, the fabricating friend, the list goes on. He knows who to ask, he knows what to ask, and he always listens and makes you feel appreciated. Even the event crew of Team VDG are called upon for their expertise; the "never-off" co-driver, the "I can guess myself" service tech and the "shock-proof" crew chief. Their "never, ever frowning" coordinator whom I have never seen daunted, and the "beyond overqualified" nutritionist with infinite patience. Everyone involved with Jud and Team VDG has one thing in common; they all want to win for their part. The term "Lead by example" comes to mind here...

For some of us the victory has already happened; the new parts are on the car and the last of the spares are in Newfoundland. All we can do from here is wait; the Targa and Team VDG web pages are idling on the taskbar and I'm waiting for the updates.

Though you have all gone to be measured against the skill and talent of your competitors I believe that your victory is already in hand. Someone once said "It's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game."

But I won't hold it against you if you win anyway...