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But there are ominous undercurrents. You hear them in Detroit and in places across the nation where people gather to race their cars. Mostly it comes from the no-talents, the malingerers, and the losers. Essentially they say, and in many cases believe, that Chevrolet Division has come up with a super sleuth racing policy. The chosen few (Penske/Donohue, Jenkins, Hall, Yunick, and possibly McLaren), according to the Chevy detractors, are on the take. "They" get money, parts, cars, advice, wind tunnel and computer time — everything short of a key to the executive john, but it's all under-the-table and secretive. Effectively, their "no racing" dictum casts Chevrolet in the role of the underdog (if it is possible to think of the manufacturer who makes one out of every four American cars as the "little guy"); but, the "bad-mouths" continue, their cleverly clandestine support enables them to zap it to the Detroit competition out on the race track. "Chevrolet is winning battles and they're not even in the shooting war!" is the way a Chevy victim complained recently. Still other skeptics groan about the wide variety of performance equipment offered by Chevy. As one Motown mogul put it, "Any factory that makes aluminum 427 engines is racing."

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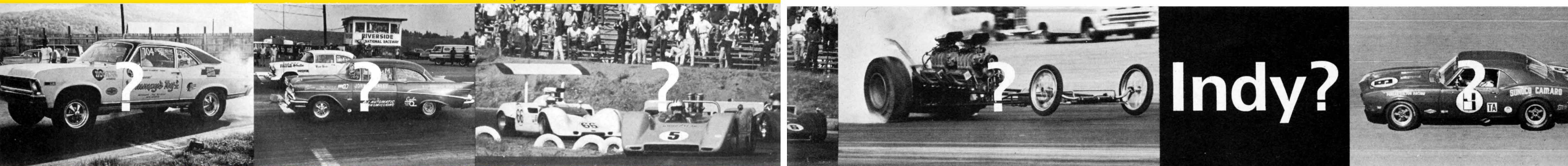
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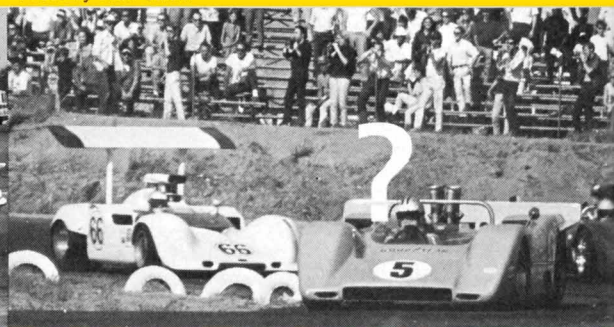
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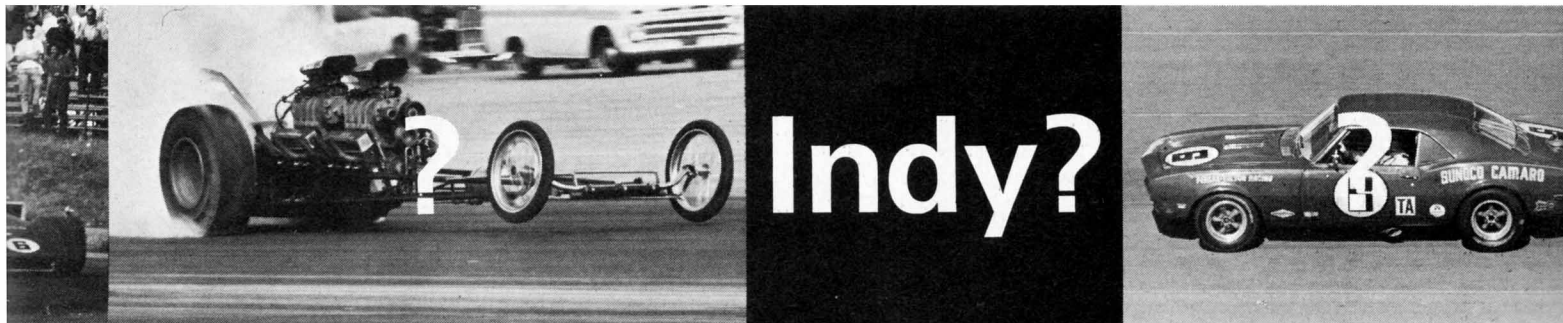
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Jim Hall — currently on injured list, but gossip about Texas oilman still persists.

does not now have the close involvement with the factory he once enjoyed, although he may still be getting a few parts and pieces, plus a certain amount of engineering/aerodynamic communication. Temporarily, Hall is out of action (he broke both legs in a spectacular flip at Las Vegas in the closing moments of the '68 season); but bear in mind that even a *modest* Texas oilman could cover the expensive costs of Group 7 racing.

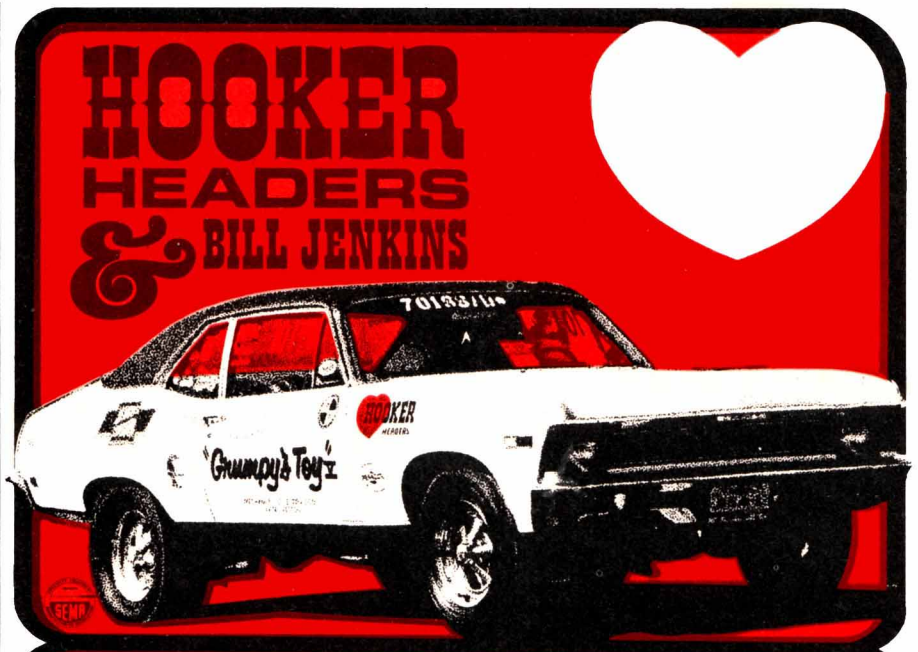
Then, there's the drag racing side of it — and Bill "Grumpy" Jenkins. The factory-back competition nods toward the car hauler as it pulls into the pits with three Jenkins cars aboard: two Super Stockers and an A/MP Camaro, plus Dave Strickler's Camaro; and they murmur, "Factory!" In reality, the car hauler is about the cheapest trailer in the pits; "Grump" says you can get 'em for "dirt." Anyway, it's Strickler who owns the rig. But last fall, after considerable interrogation that led into the wee small hours, the following conclusions were drawn concerning Bill Jenkins and his relationship with Chevrolet Division: It appears that Bill has a few names and phone numbers he can call in Detroit if he is puzzled with a technical question; also, he seems to have a semi-awareness of what Chevrolet's Product Performance has in the works in the way of new pieces. In addition, now and then, a stray part might find its way into a lunchbox and "out the back door" of Chevrolet and into Bill's Berwyn, Pennsylvania shop. But that's it. No money, no cars, no truckloads of engines, no all-day sessions with ZAD (Zora Arkus Duntov) in the secretmost recesses of Chevrolet's engineering department. More simply, there exists no Chrysler/Sox or Ford/Thompson-Yunick-Yarborough-Nicholson-Petty-Platt relationship between Chevrolet and Jenkins. If there is "factory drag racing" at Chevrolet, they don't leave much evidence of it lying around. They

not only play their cards pretty close — they play so you can't even see their cards. Perhaps the reason you can't, and can't find any other evidence, either, is because, simply, there *is* no factory subsidized racing effort at Chevrolet. And don't mistake performance parts availability with factory racing, because they are two different things. There may be a lot of cars with Chevy engines that win, but that doesn't mean the Division is playing the race game. What it does mean is that Chevrolet has an excellent performance product, one that can win without a multi-million dollar Indy or LeMans investment.

Now let's put all this conjecture in a plastic bag and shake it up. What does it all mean? Well, the way I see it, the slammer is that Chevrolet will not change their position and "go racing" in the near or distant future. Regardless of the rumors you hear about Bobby Allison getting the full factory Chevrolet "boat" for the Grand National Stocker circuit, or the car hauler Strickler uses to haul Camaro Super Stocks, or the impending 400-inch hemi "smog engine" Chevy is about to unleash, they jes' ain't goin' racin'. Why not? It's simple. Look in the plastic bag and you'll see that Chevrolet doesn't *have* to "go racing." They don't have to dump millions into 32-valve six-cam titanium 172-inch desmodromic limited production quasi-hemi's to dominate the Formula One circuit. They don't have to go racing because some of their customers, the independent parts-buying Chevy racers, are already winning close to half of everything in sight. And no matter how much money they invest in racing, Chevrolet knows they will never fill the void and win the other half of racing. But they *do* know that continuing to offer good high-performance parts *is* the plan, especially when they are applicable to their showroom offerings. It doesn't cost nearly as much to let the independents do the racing. And while the Chevy "underdog" is winning in racing, the Chevy "overdog" is winning in automotive production and sales. You might even say that Chevrolet Division is the group with the better idea, mightn't you? ©



Bill "Grumpy" Jenkins — a car-carrier perpetuates rumors of "inside" Chevy help.



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