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# Bitten by the Bug

By Cathy Dausman



Ron Wake with his race car

Photo provided

What does Ron Wake, D.D.S. have in common with Rick Mears, Niki Lauda, Dan Gurney and Paul Newman? They all race sports cars. On weekends the Lafayette dentist races Sports Car Club of America sanctioned Formula Vee cars. That's Vee, as in VW, or Volkswagen, Bug. A vintage, 1960's-era Bug. Don't snicker just yet: these ram air-cooled, open wheel racers are 10 feet long, weigh 1,000 pounds and cruise at an average 75 mph (top speed 115, "almost terminal velocity," says Wake) along asphalt road courses. To build the racer, Wake says "we take the wheels, axel and transmission and throw the Bug away."

As a child, Wake raced go-carts on his family's central California valley farm. His interest in organized racing grew out of a conversation he had with a patient who raced cars and did his own mechanical work. Wake had a BMW 2002 that needed work, and asked his patient for help. That was 1974. Soon Wake was acting as his patient's pit crew and watching from the sidelines. He bought his first Formula Vee in Oakland a couple years later, and has been racing ever since.

Now Wake owns two race cars, employs a Redwood City "motor guru" for mechanical work, and shops I/O Port Racing in Lafayette for supplies. Asked if his patients know about his "other life," Wake shrugs. He'll tell them about racing, but he doesn't flaunt it. No checkered flags adorn his office walls.

Wake has raced locally at Laguna Seca, Infineon, and Thunder Hill, in Willows, as well as in Southern California at Autoclub Speed-

way (Fontana), Willow Springs (Rosamond), Buttonwillow, and Los Angeles' old Riverside Raceway. He's competed in Wisconsin, Oregon, Nevada and Georgia. Wake maintains dual membership in the San Francisco region SCCA and the LA-based Cal Club, which allows him to race in the Southern Pacific Division. Formula Vee competes against Formula Ford, Formula C and Formula 500 (the snowmobile category...let the snickering begin.) "We're the slowest [group]," says Wake. But it's real racing, head to toe.

Like other racers, Wake suits up in Nomex and dons a crash helmet; he uses head and neck support (HANS) and clips into a 7-point body harness. Races run rain or shine; participants simply swap out rain tread tires for the dry weather slicks when needed. With its low center of gravity, Formula Vee cars rarely flip (unless the wheels are clipped) but Wake recalls spinning repeatedly after being hit in one race.

Wake competes from January through October. The three-time Northern California Region winner also placed in the Southern Pacific Division two years in a row. He finished 18 out of 45 the last two years in Wisconsin's "Road America" race. Wake's trophies are housed in his garage, and there they'll stay, says wife Sharon. But she does approve of his hobby ("When we met I was racing," says Wake) and even acts as his pit crew alongside their daughter.

On a normal weekend, Wake runs three half-hour races. He says SCCA racing is "fairly inexpensive" for a serious hobby, and race spec-

tators are admitted free. "It's a great opportunity to see professional race courses." Wake's next race weekend is July 23 and 24 on Thunderhill in Willows; he then races at Infineon September 3 and 4. It's clear he'd love to see some friendly faces lining the track.

After over 35 years of competition, the dentist who races and the racer with a dental practice says he won't retire "until my competitors tell me [to]." Even then there's another option—vintage racing, with "older cars and older drivers." For now, he's still gunning for that checkered flag.

SCCA Formula Vee racing began in 1963. Explore the San Francisco chapter of SCCA online at www.sfrscca.com, or watch video from Wake's car-mounted camera online at www.lamorindaweekly.com.



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## THE APP RAP

By Eric Pawlakos

**SoundHound**

**Price: Free**

**Developer: SoundHound, Inc.**

**For: iPhone, iTouch, and Android**

**5/5 stars**

How many times have you listened to a song on the radio that you never heard before, and you instantly loved it? You patiently wait through song after song for the DJ to identify the song, only to discover that DJ's rarely do this anymore. It's frustrating not knowing the name of the song or the artist.

SoundHound relieves this common annoyance. With a simple click of a button SoundHound listens to your song and begins its search. It takes only about 10 seconds to determine the artist and title. Once the song is recognized, SoundHound displays the song title, artist, and album. Bobby Taylor, a junior at Miramonte High School, remarked, "I like this more

than Shazam because SoundHound is actually able to identify songs that aren't included on iTunes." You also have the option to look the song up on YouTube, or bookmark the song to view later.

If it is available on Amazon or iTunes, there is a link to download it. Two outstanding features of this app are the abilities to look up the lyrics for the song, and to find future concert dates (if any) for the artist.

Douglas McKinley, also a Miramonte junior, said, "Those features make SoundHound one of the best song-identifying apps on the market."

Eric Pawlakos is a junior at Miramonte High School.

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- Nearly 60 paintings, including Bay Area, North and Central Coast and wine country landscapes
- Student work from China & Australia
- Rarely seen 1950s fashion illustrations
- European landscape
- Abstract paintings

Pam Glover, China Camp, 1990s, oil on canvas, Glover family collection photo: Jim Whiteaker

**Opening Day events:** Sunday, July 10, panel and reception free admission

**Panel discussion:** 2 pm, Soda Activity Center Reception follows, Art Patio

**Moderator:** Art historian Sarah Beserra

**Panel:** Artists Warren Dreher, Susan Kendall and Teresa Onoda.

**Hours:** 11 am ~ 4:30 pm, Wednesdays ~ Sundays

**Exhibition:** \$4 adults, Gallery members and youth free

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