

# Ian Mountain: potential unfulfilled

By Paul Watson

**This is a story of great love, great talent and great tragedy**

Ian Mountain was good at anything he turned his hand to. During the Second World War he studied at Scotch College, where he rowed with distinction. He later excelled in sailing and motorcycling, so the very patient Laurel Winsome Duguid supported her fiancé when he took up motor racing. With a fellow civil engineering student at RMIT, Bruce Young, he built a beast named the MYF (Mountain-Young Ford) Special, fitted with a 4.2 litre Ford V8.

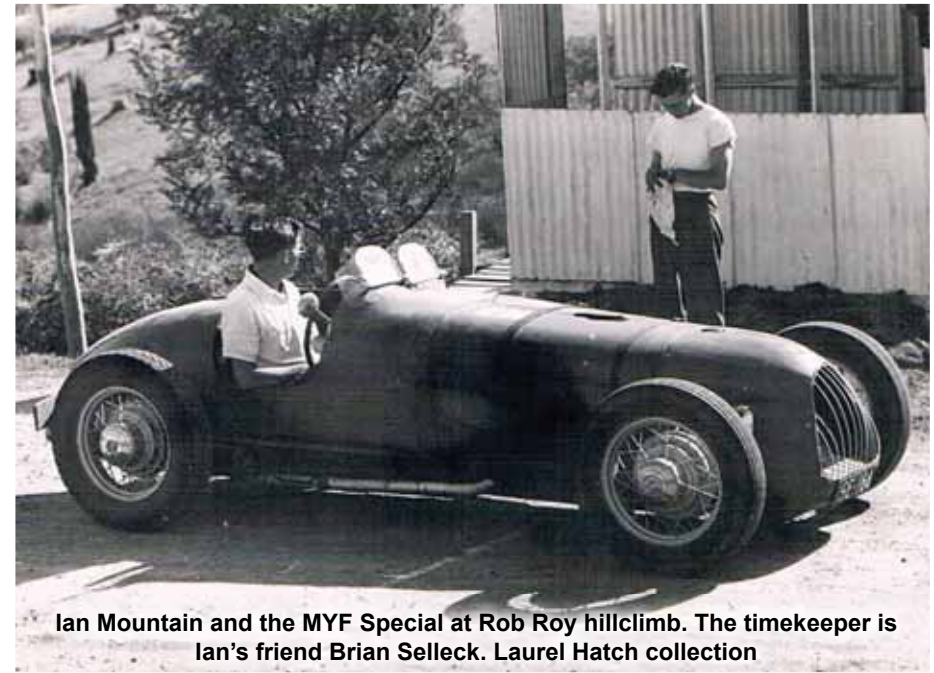
The results of a Rob Roy Hillclimb meeting on March 13, 1951 show the MYF Special recording times of 38.73, 37.83 and 36.94 seconds in the Over 3000cc class. But the remarkable Charlie Dean's Maybach Special had set a class record of 28.24 seconds at the same meeting.

The program for the Rob Roy meeting on January 29, 1951 shows Ian's MYF Special as competing Charlie Dean (Maybach Special again), among others. Charlie Dean still held the record, at 28.24 seconds and the program said he was unlucky not to hold the outright record. Ian Mountain, the program said was "faster every time".

In between competing, Ian would drive the two-seater car, now registered with the number plate



Ian Mountain in the 1953 Redex 203.  
Laurel Hatch collection



Ian Mountain and the MYF Special at Rob Roy hillclimb. The timekeeper is Ian's friend Brian Selleck. Laurel Hatch collection

SE164, to classes at RMIT. The car had no roof and only one small racing windscreen, in front of the driver. Laurel, who found riding in the MYF "a bit blowy", was able to improve her comfort level slightly by buying another windscreen for the passenger side.

Ian raced his MYF Special in the Australian Grand Prix at Bathurst on April 14, 1952. The race was won by Doug Whiteford in a 4.5 litre Talbot Lago, ahead of Stan Jones (in the Maybach Special) and Bill Murray in an Alvis-engined Alfa-Romeo Tipo B. Among the other competitors were Lex Davison, Jack E. Murray, John Crouch, Frank Kleinig, Tommy Sulman, Ken Tubman (whose MG completed only one lap) and Alex Mildren. Ian had to retire after 24 laps of the 38-lap race. But he wanted to do better than that.

Despite his training as a civil engineer, Ian by now was working as a salesman for Canada Cycle and Motor Co in Latrobe Street, Melbourne. As part of his job he drove all over Victoria in a 203 to visit dealers and soon became convinced of the development potential of the 1290cc engine.

In what was one of the most extraordinary tales to emerge from the Redex Trials, Ian was given the job of shepherding brothers Ken and Robert Ormann



Ian Mountain in the MYF Special at Bathurst, Easter 1951.  
George Reed, Bathurst: Cradle of Australian Motor Racing

in the 1953 trial. As Ken Ormann told a PCCV meeting in April 2003: “My twin brother and I were 21 at the time, and our family had a motor business at Shepparton. We took as our navigator Ian Mountain ... We were all about the same age.”

Perhaps the 203's Redex-winning performance spurred Ian to build a Peugeot racing car in 1953. He and his brother Kenneth realised that the 203's hemispherical combustion chambers and lightweight crossflow head were calling out to be turned into something much more potent.

Working at Ian's home, they put together the IKM (Ian Kenneth Mountain) Peugeot Special, with a ladder chassis (which Laurel helped to paint by hand), Peugeot steering and front suspension, and a De Dion rear end. The car used an MG TC gearbox and a Ford V8 diff but a 203 steering wheel.

MG TC brakes did the stopping, and Holden FJ rims were laced on to TC hubs.

The engine capacity was increased to 1490cc by way of a bored-out block with custom-made Rolloy pistons and sleeves. It featured a magnesium Wade R020 supercharger (mounted on a frame ahead of the front suspension and chain-driven from the front of the crankshaft). The supercharger had been built for a Cisitalia but when the Wade company of Gatwick, London, went out of business it became available. Ian heard about this rare piece of equipment from a friend, Ian McDowell, who was in England and arranged

to have it shipped to Melbourne. The invoice, dated October 1, 1953, shows the supercharger cost 100 pounds, a huge amount in those days.

The car also featured a 55mm SU carburettor and a Scintella Vertex magneto.

The classic racing body supported by hoops attached to the frame. It was built by Neil Coleman in North Melbourne.

Peugeot parts were supplied by Ian's employer, Canada Cycle, which was basking in the glory of Peugeot's success in the Redex Trials.

Ian's name must have been well known in racing circles, as he was once asked to babysit the Jack Brabham Redex Special for a night. Brabham was to race at Altona the next day and had nowhere to store his car. So the IKM Peugeot Special rubbed shoulders with the Redex Special, for a night at least.

After some discreet testing on the old Geelong Road, the IKM Special was entered in the Beveridge and Templestowe hillclimbs, then a track meeting at Fishermen's Bend, where it finished its two races despite some fuel problems.

Ian and Laurel were married at the Scotch chapel on November 2, 1954 and spent their honeymoon at the Australian Grand Prix meeting on Chevron



Ian Mountain's Peugeot Special on Mount Panorama.  
Laurel Hatch collection





IKM Peugeot Special behind the 203 tow car. Laurel Hatch collection

Island, at Southport. That event was won by Lex Davison in a 3.4 litre Jaguar-engined Formula 2 HWM and the 1500cc Peugeot Special retired after only 11 laps at speeds of up to 190kmh. But Ian was in good company, as other retirees included Stan Jones (Mk II Maybach Special), Jack E. Murray (Allard J2/Cadillac 5.3 litre) and Jack Brabham (Cooper).

Ian and Laurel's new and happy marriage was cut tragically short. At the meeting at Gnoo Blas, Orange, on Monday, January 31, 1955, Ian's car skidded at the notorious Connaghan's Corner, which is at the end of the pit straight. He corrected the skid but spun backwards and crashed off the track, demolishing 10 metres of fencing before dropping into a ditch and spinning into a group of about 12 spectators in a private paddock. Jack Brabham came upon the wreck and notified ambulancemen, who treated the injured as the race continued.

Ian was taken to Orange Base Hospital but was dead on arrival. He was just 25. A spectator was also killed in the crash, and six others were injured.

Laurel Mountain was treated in hospital for shock before being allowed to return to her South Brighton home. Another prominent race driver, John Cummins, drove Ian's 203 tow car back to Melbourne with the wrecked IKM on a trailer behind.

In 1956 Laurel and three friends sailed to England for a working holiday. There she met a Royal Australian Navy sailor named Keith Hatch, who had survived the sinking of HMAS Canberra in 1942. She met him again by chance in Melbourne two years later and they married in 1960. They had one son, who is a car buff. Keith died in 2003.

Laurel Hatch, who describes herself as a bit of a philosopher, says this quote from Theodore Roosevelt sums up Ian Mountain's character:

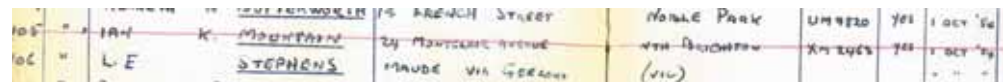
"It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat."

Ian had left the IKM Special to his brother Ken in his will but Ken found the job of rebuilding the car too much and sold it to Harry Firth. The car sat in Firth's workshop for many years before a Firth employee, Ian Tate, bought it and undertook restoration of the chassis and running gear.

At time of writing (August 2012) the chassis and body are still being repaired under the watchful eye of Ian Tate at Tate Engines, Nunawading.

*Acknowledgements: Thanks to Mrs Laurel Hatch for providing source material and moral support and to John Medley for permission to use pictures from Bathurst: Cradle of Australian Motor Racing.*

*Details of the construction of the IKM Peugeot Special come from the article 'Ian Mountain's Peugeot Special', by Ray Bell, published in Motor Racing Australia, July 2002.*



Ian Mountain joins PCCV, 1 October, 1954.