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By Christopher Wright

# Stunts and Shunts

You wouldn't believe what went on when they made *Condorman*, the Walt Disney film starring Michael Crawford.

And who got mixed up in all of it? Who was actually *Condorman* in the boat scenes? Who repaired the wrecks, fixed the engines and generally risked life and limb? Who would be so stupid?

Yes, you've guessed it: our very own Jackie Wilson, circuit driver extraordinaire, now retired from racing but still game as ever for a bit of a laugh.

I was only supposed to deliver a couple of boats to Monte Carlo and make sure they got there in one piece. I didn't know I was actually going to drive the damn things — but there was no-one else there who could handle them.

But I tell you we had some fun. It was a riot from start to finish. It is mind boggling the way they go on. Nothing, absolutely nothing, is impossible to achieve or to appear to achieve on film. Expense doesn't come into it. Doesn't exist.

If I wanted a new engine — bang, up comes a new engine. They went through 20,000 dollar boats like they were going out of fashion. They blew them up, sawed them in

half. Five beautiful 20' Eliminators they went through before they were finished.

It all started last year when the Disneys lot came along, said they were going to do *Condorman* and wanted to use drag boats as Woody's wonder machine. I told them they were mad. You can't turn a drag boat round inside about five miles and they wanted manoeuvrability. But we knew what would be perfect didn't we? A circuit rig.

We used two Chris Hodges catamarans and the main one was the boat Mark and I won the Paris Six-hour in 1979. We had 10 days to fix them all up and Chris, Mark and I worked liked slaves to get them ready and at Monte Carlo in time for to start filming.

When we got there I got lumbered with the job of driving them. I say lumbered, but it wasn't all bad — all expenses paid for March, April and May shooting a film round places like Monte Carlo, Nice and Miramar. No, it wasn't all bad.

Mind you, we had to work hard: start at six and work non-stop for 12 to 15 hours. The longest stretch we worked was for 36 hours non-stop.

The two catamarans were always getting smashed up or sinking, but at least they still exist and are being used for publicity. The Eliminators, though, took a right old

pounding.

One was supposed to be sliced in half by a laser beam and to get this effect we sawed it in two and screwed it back together again with explosive bolts. These were then triggered off by wire and more TNT was thrown in as well for a big bang.

There was a lot of TNT knocking about. We sent one boat out piled up with the stuff. It was supposed to go out to sea and explode in a certain place, but it doubled back to the shore where we were standing. You've never seen people move so fast and then the thing switched back again and headed for the camera boat. They all threw themselves overboard. Mayhem, pure mayhem. It finally blew up safely and no-one was injured.

Another boat, a 40' Abbatte would you believe, was picked clean out of the water by a helicopter, but only just. Imagine trying to pick up one of those things and fly about with it dangling underneath. The stunt girl was very lucky in that scene. The wires holding the Abbatte slipped at 200'. Again, though no-one was hurt. Thank goodness.

They were a great bunch of people. It was serious business, but there was a hell of a lot of fun. It was an unforgettable experience and I hope it came out all right. I haven't seen the film yet!