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By JASON STEIN
FOR WHEELBASE COMMUNICATIONS

Maybe it all starts with the name, a curious and unusual one that is as distinct as the man himself. It is one of the few traces left of a family history that dates back to a village in Syria that is now part of Lebanon. Of a time when an immigrant grandfather named George carved out a living selling textiles door-to-door in a new country to avoid going on the dole, and a grandson who learned to love fast cars as much as conversations on commerce and politics around the family's kitchen table at night.

Rahal. The name is so unusual it once appeared as Bobby Ray Hall on a NASCAR entry list, as if he was a good-of-boy from the Deep South, not central Ohio.

But after it was carved on the Borg-Warner Trophy in the spring of 1986 — correctly spelled, mind you — there were Rahals everywhere.

"After I won the Indy 500," Bobby once said, "then all the Rahals in the country came out of the woodwork claiming to be my long-lost cousins."

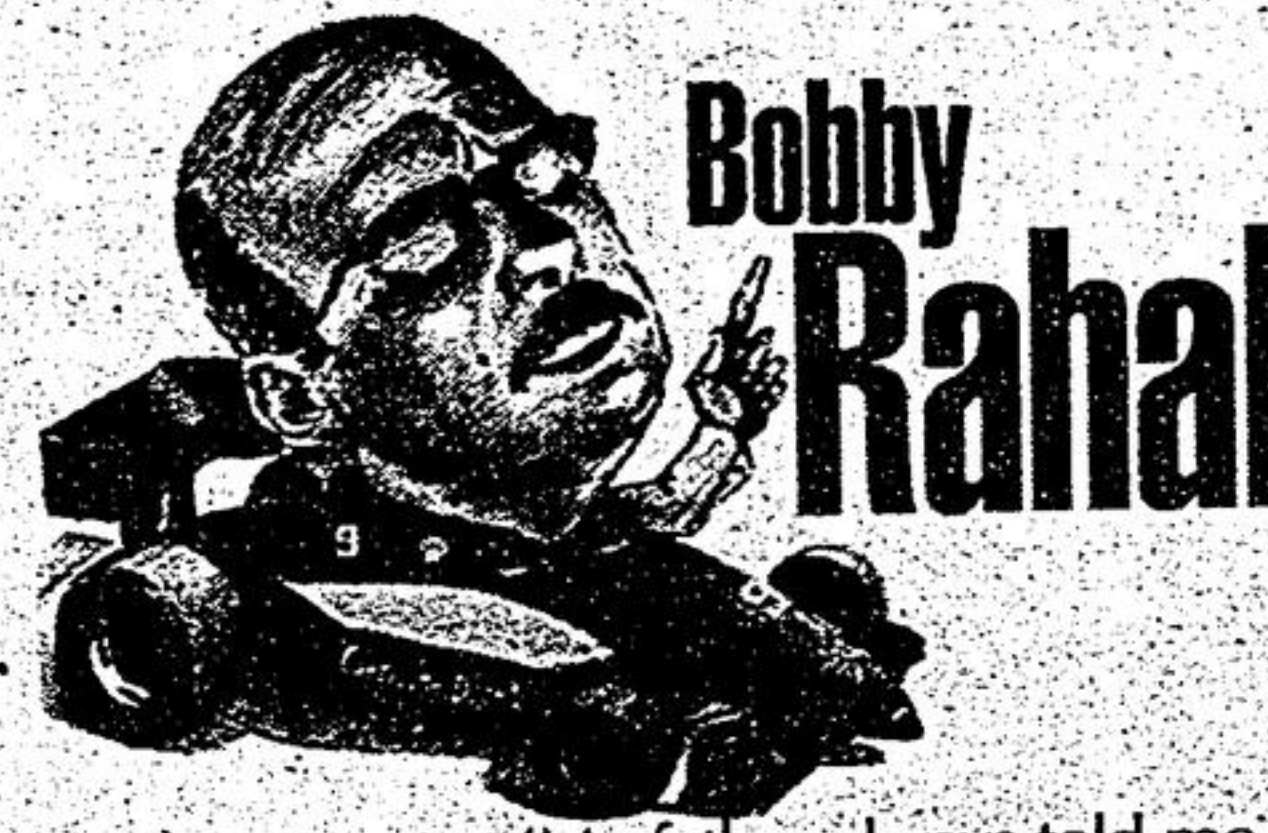
Today, Bobby Rahal is still the original, a simple man who enjoys the simple pleasures in life: Eric Clapton's guitar; Jamie Lee Curtis's movies; and lamb chops stuffed with Roquefort cheese... and the drive to succeed.

He has won three Indy car titles; he has lost a political struggle (and his job) with Formula One's power brokers. But, through it all, he has kept his reputation as a skillful artisan of motor sport, a man to be reckoned with either as a driver, owner or CEO. Driven to be versatile. Driven to be the best.

"My father always told me to be proud of who

YORK REGION WHEELS

we were," says Rahal. "I've never let him down." Born Robert Woodward Rahal in January of 1953, Bobby would become a voracious reader of racing publications as a boy, learning the inner workings of cars then watching as his father,



Bobby Rahal
"My father always told me to be proud of who we were... I've never let him down."

Michael, transformed the little garage next to their red-brick house on Crescent Boulevard in Glen Ellyn, Ill., where the family years later, into a motor racing laboratory. Bobby was the student.

The more Michael Rahal's food wholesale business grew, the more he dove into his hobby, and the more the eldest son fell in love.

"The summers, to me, were always Little League baseball and racing," Rahal says. "But as I grew older, baseball was out, and it became more and more racing. There were always race cars around our house. It was a very heady environment."

Bobby would follow his father to club races around tracks in the Midwest and himself began driving only after his father convinced officials one weekend at a Canadian track that his son was 18, not 17. The race was on.

From Formula Atlantic to Formula Three in Europe to Formula One, Rahal quickly developed into the racer his father could never be, driving anything he could get his hands on. He spent a year on street circuits, then another year racing in Italy — the penniless artist with the open road his canvass.

"The best year of my life," Rahal says. Although he had no early interest in racing in America, he eventually returned to the United States to run in the 24 Hours of Daytona endurance race — winning in his second season — and then came Indycar. With the help of Red Roof Inn guru Jim Trueman, Rahal had his first ride in 1982, finishing as the runner-up that CART season and winning Rookie of the Year.

Over the next 17 years, he would win three Indycar titles, win at Indianapolis (in a race he would dedicate to a cancer-stricken Trueman), finish in the top five in 116 of 264 Indycar starts and start and drive for his own team with co-owner, and comedian, David Letterman before retiring in 1999.

And Rahal was just getting rolling. If there is one ingredient he has kept through 31 of his 48 years, it is his versatility. Life after driving a race car means many things: overseeing numerous car dealerships in Pennsylvania, from Toyota to Mercedes; organizing children's charities; competing in annual golf tournaments (he's a 10-handicap); and enduring the ups and downs at Jaguar.

During the past year, Rahal has gone from running his two-car CART team and running CART as an interim CEO, to running his team and heading up Jaguar's Formula One program, the latter a tenure to forget. In less than nine months at Jaguar, Rahal was hired to clean house, and did. Then he ran into roadblocks when former F-1 champ Niki Lauda was brought in to oversee the premier performance division of Ford, which owns Jaguar.

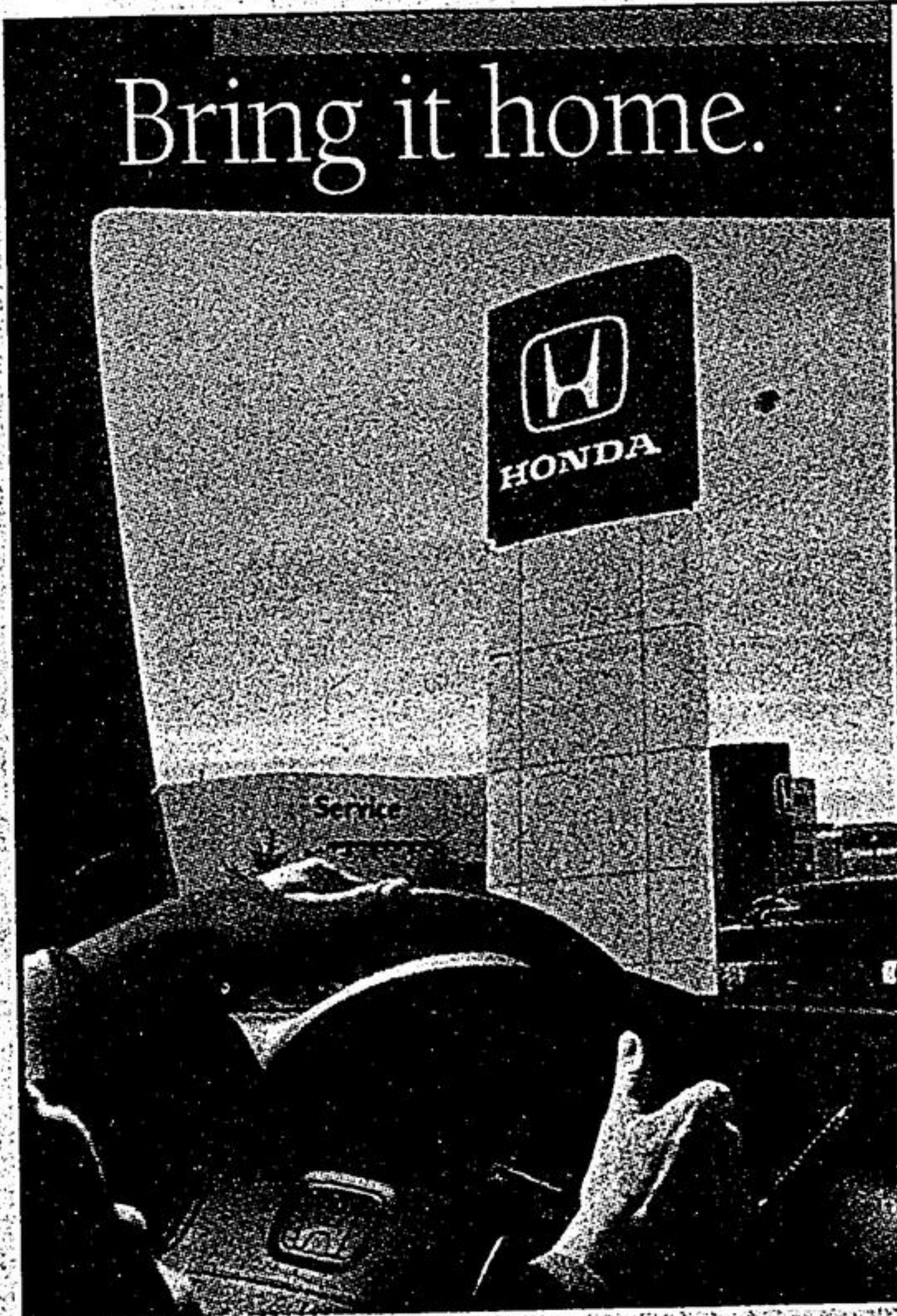
The two disagreed over just about everything — engines, drivers and designers. In the end, Rahal was the one to go, albeit with that usual grace.

"I made it clear there could only be one boss and felt that I didn't have the support," Rahal said. "One guy needs to be calling the shots."

In the end, he is back calling his own — returned to the racing team he built, the dealerships he runs, back to Indianapolis next season as an owner and back to reading non-fiction, history, aviation and travel books.

He's even considered starting a Formula Atlantic open-wheel team. Just more of that Rahal name to go around.

"Who knows what the future holds," he said last September. "But it will be fun."



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Mark Emin (left), President of Landmark Vehicle Leasing, is pleased to welcome Barry Cox (right) as an associate broker to the Landmark sales team. Barry brings 38 years of automotive fleet, leasing and marketing experience with General Motors to Landmark along with a vast network of friends and business associates. Barry has lived in the Markham area for the past 25 years with his wife Donna and their three daughters. He is an avid golfer out of Spring Lakes Golf Club and former captain and executive member of the Markham Men's Recreational Hockey League.

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