

ASSOCIATED ELECTRICS INC.



I FIRST MET Gene Hastings and Roger Curtis of *Associated Electrics* whilst competing in the 1979 Winter Nationals in Florida and subsequently at the 1979 World Championships in Geneva. Whilst at Geneva, and afterwards at Weisbaden, a lasting friendship was struck with the *Associated* team, but more specifically with Mike Rowlands who works at the factory and is largely responsible for the main workshop and toolmaking. It was Mike who, when I first took an interest in 1/12th scale in November 1979 supplied me with my first Team Car, something which up till then had never been seen in the UK, an ultra lightweight car, the forerunner of the now hugely successful lightweight competition kit.

Whilst not enjoying a big corner of the UK market with their 1/8th scale products, *Associated's* 'RC12E' is the

most popular 1/12th scale car in the UK. So when an invitation to compete in the 1980 US Nationals was extended by the factory, I hastily accepted. The five weeks which ensued after our departure from Heathrow at the beginning of July 1980 were some of, if not the most memorable weeks I have spent since I started racing model cars. I cannot thank the guys at *Associated* enough for the overwhelming hospitality which was afforded me during my stay. Of the five weeks I was there, over a week was actually spent in the factory itself. For the benefit of any of the many people who drive *Associated* 'RC12Es' or for that matter any of the *Associated* cars, we have prepared for you a tour of the factory, so that you too can see the various Departments and meet the people who make your cars.

Roger and Lee that they decided to open their own slot racing shop, called *Associated Raceway*, in Lynwood California in 1964.

Roger and Lee were both very inventive and started making parts for slot cars under the *Associated Electrics* brand name. Two years later they sold the raceway and moved to South Gate, California and continued making slot car parts. The business expanded and in 1968 they moved to larger facilities in Paramount California. Jim Kirby was hired to make slot car body tooling. Slot car bodies, wheels and tyres, braid, guides and chassis parts were manufactured. The next big step was to make their own custom slot car racing motor, all the necessary designing was done, and all the expensive tooling was completed, but the complete motor was never finished!

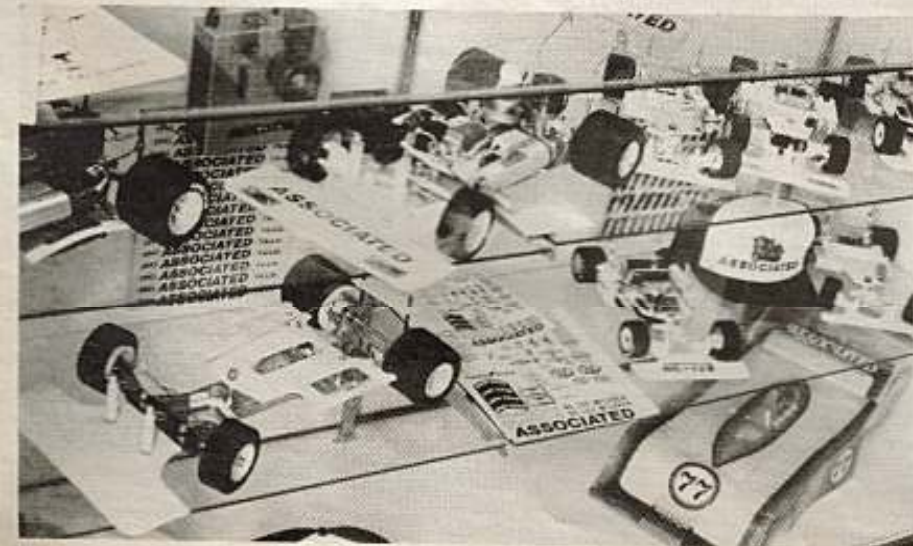
Something happened that immediately changed Roger's and Lee's minds. *Dynam* Models had just released their new, full independent suspension 1/8th scale R/C car. When Roger and Lee saw this, they immediately stopped development on slot

Heading: this and another identical building house Associated organisation in sunny California. Below left on display, the various 1/8 and 1/12 scale cars to Associated manufacture. Below right: the electric assembly area, in the foreground battery packs being put together.

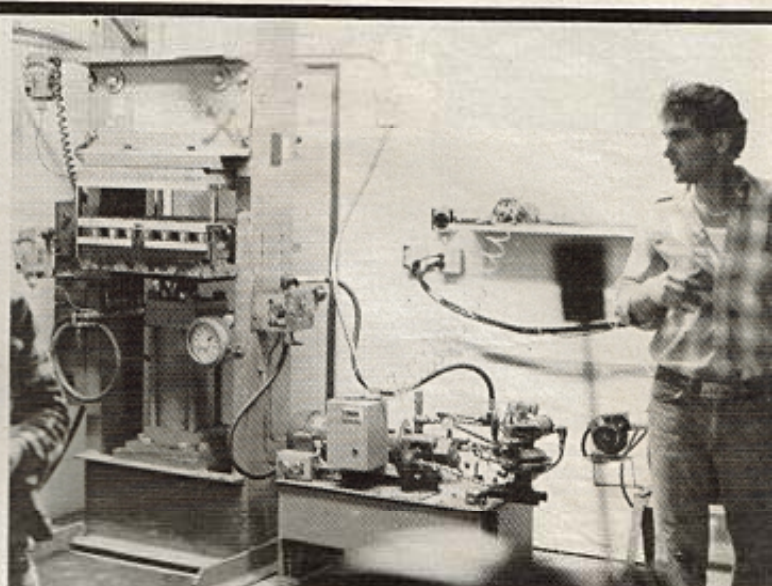
It seems everyone familiar with R/C cars wants to tour the *Associated Electrics* factory when they're in Southern California. Realising not all of you may have that opportunity, we'd like to take you on that tour with photos.

Once inside the factory, many questions are asked, such as "How did *Associated* get

started?" etc., etc. Roger Curtis and Lee Yurada were working at *Douglas Aircraft*, where Roger was an engineer and Lee was a technician. Lee had heard of slot cars and took Roger to Modelrama Raceway, where it was so crowded they had to wait in the parking area for 1 hour before they could enter the raceway! This so impressed



Walt Bailey describes a visit to the California home of the race-winning RC12E and RC300 cars



car parts, and went into full time work on R/C cars.

They hired Mike Morrissey, who was a genius at designing slot cars, to design an R/C car, and Jack Garcia to make bodies, so, Roger, Lee and Mike, not knowing a thing about R/C cars, got all their R/C car knowledge from the 'Dynamic' car and the 'Ra-Car'. As complicated in design as the 'Dynamic' car was, the 'Ra-Car' was super simple, and functional, but very fragile.

There's an old saying in car racing that will forever be true, "To be first in a race, first you must finish the race." The 'Dynamic' car was so complicated, it hardly ever finished a race. So they studied the 'Ra-Car' and designed the *Associated RC1*.

The 'RC1' was an immediate success, because it had understeer thus making it easy to drive, while the other types would easily spin-out going down the straight. The 'RC1's history of race wins, continued for years. Mike Morrissey dominated racing in Southern California with the 'RC1'. Roger Curtis, Chris Chan (driving a Morrissey-

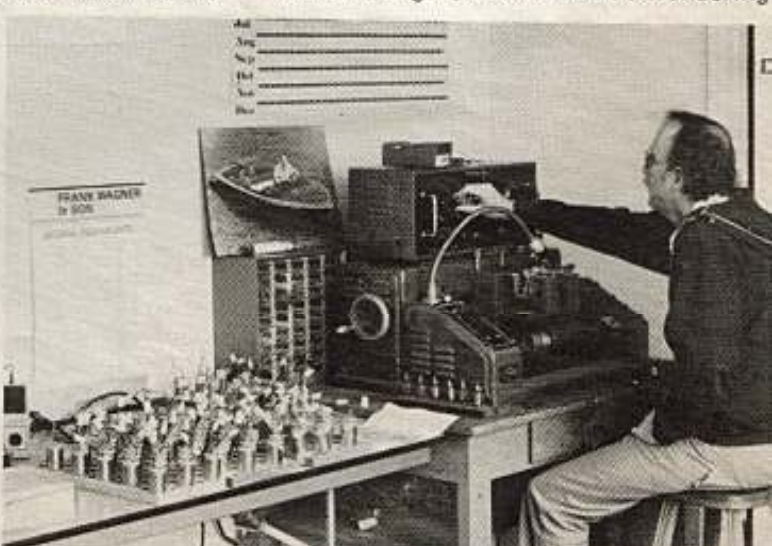
Above left: shipping area, where customers' orders are collated and packed. Above right: demand for Associated moulded tyres necessitated the building of this machine. Right: 1/12 electric motor sub-assembly area. Below left: battery charger and motor final assembly. Below right: motor magician Mike Reedy balancing armatures for modified motors.



prepared car) and Chuck Hallum, were all ROAR National Champions driving the 'RC1' car. The 'RC1' was the first car to use foam tyres and an adjustable clutch, which was soon copied by everyone else.

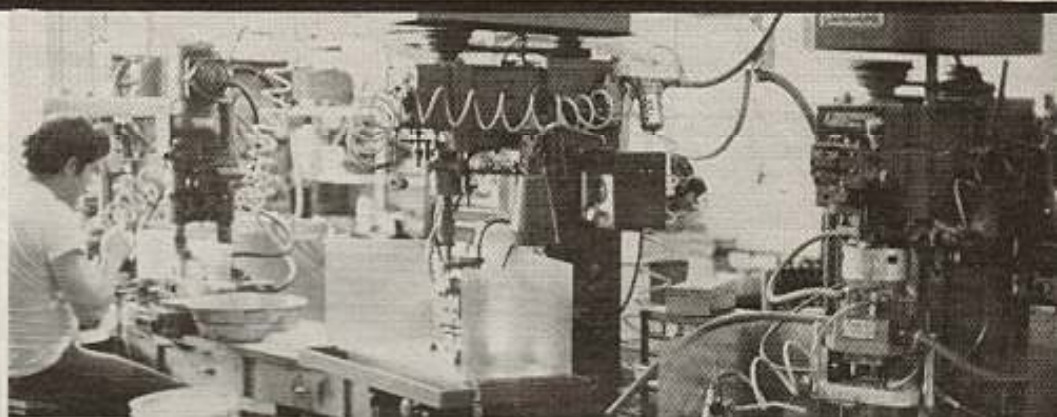
During 1972 Morrissey left *Associated* and designed his own 'Taurus' car, which was an immediate success, which forced

Roger and Lee to make some changes on the 'RC1' but they couldn't agree on the changes. This dispute eventually led to Lee Yurada selling his half of the company to a somewhat reluctant buyer, Gene Husting. Slot car racing was slowing down, the 'RC1' was being surpassed by other, newer, designs, and Gene was wondering





Above left: rubber sheet for rear tyres awaiting transformation in the factory. Above right: automatic drilling machines are used to help increase quantity and quality of production.



how smart a move this was. Shortly afterwards, *Associated* moved to Santa Ana, California.

Gene was running his own scratchbuilt car at the time, with considerable success, but when Roger and Gene estimated how much it would cost to produce this car, they knew it wouldn't work out. The 'RC1' kit sold for \$89.00, and the proposed new 'RC100' kit would cost \$125.00. Nobody would pay that much. But something had to be done, so they went ahead on production of the 'RC100' anyway. What a surprise! Its immediate success was phenomenal! Gene Husting won six Southern California total Series Races, with five to six races in each series, as well as a ROAR National GT Championship race. Roger Curtis won another ROAR National Can-Am Championship race.

And in the hand of super drivers, the performance of the 'RC100' was unreal, Bill Jianas finally found a car to keep up with his driving talents. At the 1st World Championships in 1977 in Pomona, Jianas

Below left: further automatic machinery is employed, here thread tapping is taking place. Below right: three bays of the factory unit are taken up with storage of bulk parts - how many drivers wouldn't sign away their souls to be let loose in here?



was Top Qualifier, the *Associated* 'RC100' won the first seven places as well as ninth. In all, eight out of ten cars in the 'A' Main were 'RC100' cars, with Butch Kroell's 'RC100' giving him the World Championship title.

While Jianas, Curtis Husting, Jeff Rold, Rick Davis, Chuck Phelps, Earl Campbell, Dana Smeltzer and many others were winning the big races in the USA, the same thing was happening in other countries, with drivers using the *Associated* cars. Debbie Preston and Dave Martin became English Champions, Karlheinz Will became German Champion — twice, Per Gustaffson, Swedish Champion, Gherzi, Italian Champion, Marrot, French Champion, etc., etc. Soon, other manufacturers were copying the 'RC100'.

But, in the meantime, Gene and Roger, with the help of the *Associated* Team, were busy designing the 'RC200', then the 'RC300', and the 'RC300-D'. The racing success continued. *Associated* placed five out of ten cars in the Final at the 2nd World Championships in 1979 in Geneva. Curtis Husting was 2nd fastest qualifier, with Bill Jianas again taking 2nd in the race and Chuck Phelps 3rd. The following week at the German Grand Prix in Wiesbaden, against virtually the same field, Curtis was Top Qualifier, with Rick Davis winning the

race and Debbie Preston 2nd with the *Associated* cars. Two 24 Hour Championships followed.

Meanwhile, Roger and Gene became interested in the 1/12th scale electric car. Roger designed the basic car, with naturally help from Gene and the rest of the *Associated* Team in 1976. In 1979, Mike Reedy started modifying the electric motor for *Associated* on a part time basis, and in 1979 Mike joined *Associated*, taking over the motor manufacturing and development department.

The success of the *Associated* 'RC12-E' electric car was amazing. In 1978, 1979 and 1980 the 'RC12-E' car won nine out of a possible 11 ROAR National Championship events! New super drivers appeared such as Mike Lavacot and Kent Clausen, winning two Nationals apiece. Other Nationals winners included Curtis Husting, Rick Davis, Arturo Carbonnell, all with the 'RC12-E'. 1980 saw another 24 Hour Championship this time with the 1/12th scale RC12-E, in Birmingham, England. What's next? We can't tell you now, but we're sure it will be a winner!

Once more, I would like to thank Gene Husting, without whose help this article would not have been possible, and all the guys at the factory — keep up the good work.

Walt Bai

