

I'll never slow down, says Jackie Stewart... 50 years after Grand Prix debut (But don't ask the Flying Scot to drive – he relies on his chauffeurs)

AFTER nearly two hours of high-speed duelling and jostling, he suddenly spied his chance.

With only two laps to go, as his main rival drifted wide on the corner, the young Scottish driver – distinctive tartan stripe worn proudly on his helmet – stamped on the accelerator.

As the speedometer leapt to

By Peter Robertson

more than 150 miles per hour, he pulled away from the others – and roared to victory.

And when the chequered flag brought to an end the 1965 Italian Grand Prix, Jackie Stewart suddenly claimed his place in sporting

history. Not only was the race the first in what would become his astonishing tally of 27 Grand Prix wins and three World Championships, it also propelled him into a brightly-lit arena of glamour, celebrity and wealth.

Both on and off the track, the 26-year-old appeared suddenly possessed by a turbo-charged and

unstoppable momentum and velocity. Even now, at the age of 76, it seems he is still refusing to slow down.

Speaking ahead of the 50th anniversary of that first, historic, victory, the diminutive driver – one of the few so-called 'living legends' who genuinely deserves the title – has disclosed that he still has a packed schedule that would weary many a younger man: training in the gym several times a week, flying the equivalent of a dozen times around the world every year, and acting as a consultant for F1, an ambassador for various luxury brands and a champion for charity.

In a wide-ranging interview with The Scottish Mail on Sunday he has also exposed his complexities and contradictions. He is, after all, a rich and successful man easy in the company of business leaders and politicians but who – because of his dyslexia – remains unable even to master the alphabet.

Likewise, despite his prowess behind the wheel, earning him the nickname the Flying Scot, he has relied almost entirely on chauffeurs to ferry him around for decades now.

He also shares anecdotes about the famous names he is happy to count as friends including Princess Anne – he even loaned her his F1 car – and fellow Scots Sir Sean Connery ('We speak every week; he is still going strong') and violinist Nicola Benedetti.

Although haunted by the deaths of so many of his fellow racing drivers from the sport's most dangerous era, he cherishes the support and company of his childhood sweetheart Helen.

'The quality of life... I've been a very lucky boy'

Happily married since 1962, they have homes in Geneva and Buckinghamshire – the latter large enough for their two sons, two daughters-in-law, and nine grandchildren to visit regularly.

Jackie said: 'When I think back at everything that's happened, it's almost unbelievable. The privileges, the benefits, the quality of life for me and my family... I've been a very lucky boy.'

Born John Young Stewart in Milton, Dunbartonshire, he attended Dumbarton Academy where his undiagnosed dyslexia caused him 'the unhappiest and most difficult years of my life'.

In his teens he found solace in shooting at which he represented Scotland, and as an apprentice mechanic in his family's car dealership. The latter eventually led him to follow in the tracks of his older brother Jimmy, a racing driver who competed in the 1953 British Grand Prix.

Admiring the four trophies – including for the 1965 Italian Grand Prix – he keeps in the study of his home in the Chilterns, Jackie knows that his remarkable record in Formula 1 from 1965 until 1973 is almost surpassed by the fact that he never had a major accident in that period when drivers were all too often killed, including his fellow brilliant Scot, Jim Clark.

'Had Jim survived, he'd have been a Border farmer today,' Jackie reckons. 'That was his passion. Many times he left for a Grand Prix wishing he was still a farmer. He was a true man of the land.'

'I quite often have dreams of friends we've lost, but in a nice way. One night, Helen and I counted 57 friends had been killed that I'd raced with or we'd holidayed or spent time with.' But

Racing hero on his wife, the deaths that haunt him and his celeb friends

MY PAL CONNERY AND I



FAMOUS FRIEND: Jackie and Sean

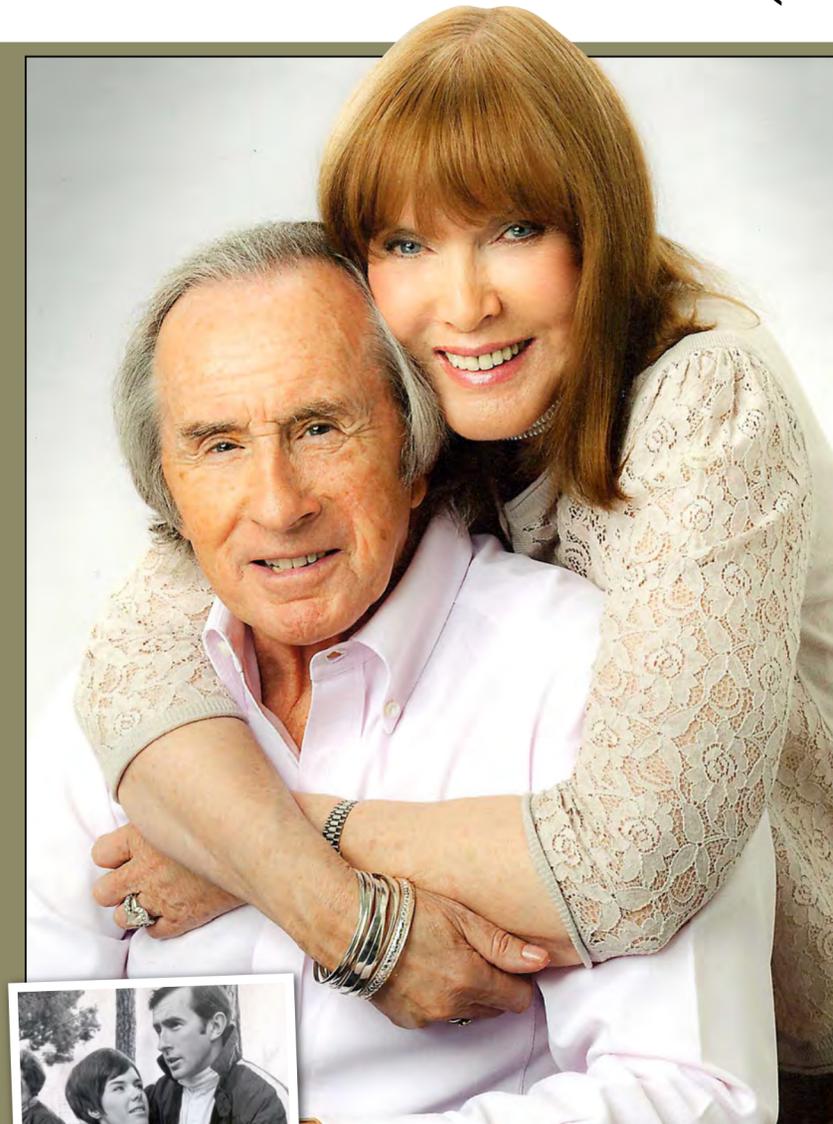
'I speak to Sean every week. Knees still collapse from the girls when they hear him'

despite losing so many friends, his achievements on the track also served as an introduction to an incredible array of well-known personalities.

He said: 'Actors, singers, business tycoons or monarchs... they all love sport. As sportsmen or women, you get opportunities to meet people. George Harrison was one of my best friends. Eric Clapton is one of my best friends. When you're good at something and they're good at what they do, there's a synergy – a no-competition clause.'

'In 1971, I won Sportsman Of The Year and Princess Anne won Sports-woman Of The Year, so we got to know each other. Because we were both in sport, we built a comfortable friendship. The nicest time was when she drove my Formula 1 car.'

'I won in Monaco four times, and I got to know Princess Grace, Prince Rainier, and their children Caroline, Albert



LONG-TERM LOVE: Jackie and Helen Stewart today, above, and in 1967, left



and Stephanie. We went on holiday with them quite often. Grace was such an attractive lady and carried the life of being a princess in a wonderful fashion.'

Jackie has particularly enjoyed sharing his success with his wife of 53 years, Helen, and their sons Paul, an investor, and Mark, a film-maker. But in recent times, Jackie, Helen and Paul have battled different forms of cancer. 'We're all in good

health,' Jackie insists now. 'I was in the gym yesterday, and I'm going again today. My weight is almost the same as when I was racing.'

He also has good news of his long-term pal, Connery, who has been the subject of various ailment rumours. 'I speak to Sean almost every week. He's in fine form. He's now 84 but you wouldn't know from his voice that he's that age. Knees still collapse from the girls when they hear his voice!'

Like Connery, Jackie left his homeland and is unlikely to return. 'Tax was 93 per cent. That year, 1968, I earned £100,000. If anything had happened to me then, Helen could not have managed the rest of her life as well as we have done. So we went to Switzerland, but it wasn't because I didn't love Scotland.'

You usually just have to look at

Jackie to see how much he loves Scotland. 'There was a tartan band round my racing helmet. Every time I go to a Grand Prix, I wear tartan trews.'

Jackie retains a keen interest in Scottish politics – 'I get on very well

'I often have dreams of friends we've lost'

with Jack McConnell, Alex Salmond, and Nicola Sturgeon, who's a very clever woman' – and two particular young Scots.

'I think Nicola Benedetti is wonderful and an extremely talented musician. We should be proud of her as a Scot. She was my guest at

1965: NOVICE JACKIE AT MONACO GRAND PRIX...



THE ROAD TO SUCCESS: Jackie negotiates the tricky track in his second race

WITHIN MONTHS, HE'S GRABBED FIRST VICTORY



UP WITH THE CUP: Jackie is held aloft after winning Italian Grand Prix at Monza

2001: ARISE, SIR JACKIE



HONOUR: Receiving his knighthood

to the brim.' Jackie was relieved his son Paul didn't race for long, and now has fingers crossed his grandchildren (who range in age from six to 20) won't pursue it either. 'I hope not. One is more than enough!'

In 2013, a planned £20 million movie with Ewan McGregor portraying Jackie was halted when Helen objected to a storyline claiming she had an affair with French driver Francois Cevert.

'The movie might have been a good idea, but without it being, let's say, added to in order to make it box office. It would have been sex and violence. I don't like either to be associated with my life. Violence has already played too big a part in my life,' he adds, referring to friends who died racing.

Aptly, reflecting on his glittering racing career today, Jackie feels it went by in a flash. 'It was like an elevator that suddenly travelled at three times its proper speed. I remember talking to George Harrison about his time with The Beatles, and certain things he didn't remember at all – such as the pace of life – and that was the same with me.'

'Helen and I love spending time with our family... and with our Norfolk Terriers, Pimms and Whisky. I'm busier today than I've ever been in my entire career, including travelling 350,000 to 400,000 miles a year by air, and I'd like to continue what I'm doing now for another ten years, God willing. Age doesn't bother me. It's important to keep yourself active and your mind working.'

'I'd since retired, I've never wished again. I was lucky. My cup was full

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