



“The challenge — and how I see it — is important to me.”



# A hobbyist at heart

Just driving is simply not enough for famed rally racer Jutta Kleinschmidt

She is fascinated by outer space. That is one of the reasons why she decided to study physics. Reaching for the stars has certainly typified her life. If everything around Jutta Kleinschmidt is at rest, she gets restless. Regardless of whether it is the processor in her beloved computer, the Schweizer 300 CBI helicopter, her racing bike or engines on two to four wheels — constant movement is characteristic for her. “It is the challenge that is important to me,” Kleinschmidt reveals, “and my estimate of the challenge.” That is why you will not find the one-time winner of the Paris-Dakar rally in the driver’s seat as often as in the past. The fact that “her race” moved from Northern Africa to South America is just one reason. “Paved roads do not excite me so much anymore, the adventure factor is lacking.” And she also thinks that the technology itself has become static. “We will have to rethink our position in motorsports. I would like to see a manufacturer develop an environmentally-friendly race car. Now that would be a tremendous challenge for me!” Actually, Kleinschmidt, who chooses to live in Monaco, feels development to be more important to her than driving.

## From model car to racing car

The fact is that the stars did not much favor her tinkering. She was young when her father left the family and so Jutta Kleinschmidt grew up in a purely female household. But there was no room for clichés in this constellation. “We did not have typical assignment of roles and I was able to pursue my own interests early on.” In her case that meant model cars, ships, and airplanes. “I have always enjoyed working with my hands, and I guess I got that from my granddad.”

The models quickly became metallic dreams in motion. She got her own motor-assisted bicycle when she was 14 — until her mother realized that the minimum age had been raised to 15. She confiscated Jutta’s first two-wheeler until

her next birthday. Later Kleinschmidt tuned her motorcycle for racing right in her own apartment, stacking cylinders alongside pots and pans in the kitchen. “I learned a lot about vehicles — things I never would have learned in my physics studies.” She was able to apply the knowledge she gained in her “home hobbyist apprenticeship” and in studies at the technical university about the “source of all things” — as she puts it. That was in the vehicle development department of BMW. “I conducted crash tests. I developed test beds and evaluation programs,” she recalls, “and there I quickly learned the consequences of running a car into the wall.” She seems to have taken that to heart. During her racing career — for which she left her promising job at BMW against all warnings — she has not had any serious accidents.

## Being first is not everything

Looking back, Kleinschmidt sees her association with VW as the most exciting period. There she participated in the development of the rally version of the Touareg SUV — all the way from a blank sheet of drafting paper to the race car at the starting line. “It was amazing to be the first competitor in a vehicle I had helped to develop.” That is why it was more important to achieve good results with a diesel-powered vehicle than to take gold. Here, her own philosophy comes into play: “Winning a race without any real competition means nothing to me. I would rather place fifth in a super-tough field.” And competition is by no means a thing of the past, since the end of her racing career is still in the stars — she has not found the right challenge yet. Perhaps the first female to win the Paris-Dakar rally will also win the first race in an environmentally-friendly vehicle. □

Tell us,  
Ms. Kleinschmidt ...

... what do you see as your greatest strength. And your greatest weakness?

I am very good at self-motivation and have great endurance and perseverance. But I am also terribly impatient!

... how would you characterize yourself in just a few words?

I love adventure and I enjoy competing against others. I am excited about technology and enjoy working with my hands. Moreover, I would characterize myself as very honest. I hate injustices. I could blow my top on that.

... where do you draw your energy from?

From my desires, dreams and challenges.

... what would you take with you to the proverbial desert island?

I would take a computer with Internet access in any case, otherwise I would be bored to death. And then a knife for simple survival. You can do almost anything with good knife.

... what dream would you like to make come true in your lifetime?

I would definitely like to experience outer space — but the price is going to have to come down a little bit.



In the thriller entitled “Nine Miles Down” Jutta Kleinschmidt proves that her aviation skills are more than good enough for the movies.