

Society of LAND SPEED RACING HISTORIANS

Newsletter #29

Websites posting the newsletter are: www.landspeedproductions.biz, www.oilstick.com, www.landracing.com, www.speedrecordclub.com, www.ahrf.com/video.php, www.hotrodhotline.com.

President's Corner: By Jim Miller.

Got this from Doug. He's right. Jim

MILLER...STOKES HERE. THE DAMN HISTORIANS THING IS DARN NEAR UNREADABLE...THERE'S GOT TO BE A FEW PARAGRAPHS AND BREAKS...AS IT LOOKS NOW MY EYES GLAZE OVER...AND THERE'S PLENTY OF GOOD STUFF ABOARD. HELP, STOKES

Editor: My brother has pointed this out to me, but not the solution. It affects about 5 % of the readers and I don't know if it's my system or their's. At the present I have no time to solve this problem and both of my computer gurus are on vacation.

The only suggestion that I can give is to go to the websites and read the newsletters there. The website operators have a way of cleaning up what I send to them and presenting it in a more readable format. Since it is simply a LONG email, it baffles me why there are 4 or 5 members who can't seem to read what is sent to them. It is on my long list of to-dos though. (If you are using a Imac then words come through smaller than on a PC - ejr)

Editor's notes: In case I have forgotten, we want to welcome Dave Seely and Gale Banks to our group. Back issues of the Newsletter can be found on the websites listed above. The purpose of our group is to save our land speed racing history and heritage. To do that we must write, caption, record and preserve everything we know. Please start your biographies and send them to me to add to the Newsletter.

1.) *I think Bret Kepner should be added to the Historians List. His knowledge of Bonneville Participants is extensive. Besides, he knows how to write and speak. He is the organizer of the Kilo Club. The membership is very restricted. Glenn Freudenberger*

Glenn: Bret was added to the list. Please let him know that he is going to receive it. The membership of the Society is open to everyone. It is not restricted. Why it seems that way is that I don't have much time right now to make calls and find out who wants to join. There are no dues, duties or requirements to belong, only a willingness to receive the newsletter. We don't even require that some one be nominated. At a later date the members may want to organize in a different way and that is perfectly fine. We set up the organization in this fashion in order to make it easy to grow. Many of our members come to us after reading the issues in the 6 websites that run our newsletter.

2) *I did, in fact, get off the soapbox and write my memoirs. It is currently at 5 pages. I need to go over it and see if I left anything out. Once I do that, I will send it to you. Please add Randy Travis to the mailing list for the newsletter. Jim isn't computer literate, but Randy is. Thanks, Bob McMillian*

Bob: I added Jim and Randy Travis to the list. Please let them know the newsletter is on the way and that back newsletters can be found at our kind website operators. If you don't want to have your biography listed in the Gone Racin' by-line, please let me know. Otherwise I will add it to the Gone Racin' series with you as the author and myself as the editor. This allows me to send out your work to those that are receiving my articles. Biographies, stories and articles that are intended ONLY for society members and not to go into the newsletter or onto the internet should be clearly marked in the main body of the email AND in the Subject box. However, once your article is sent to the members, the editor cannot control others from referring your work on to their friends. Write your articles in such a manner that if it should get out into the public domain, that it is what you want to say.

3) *I'll send a story about the Bonneville Northwest Reunion in the next few days. It's easy to start there and then I'll add what I remember of my 117 trips to Wendover since 1963. I can't say "to the Salt" because there have been times that I went to Wendover and never made it to the Salt. One time it rained when I was at Utah MP 12 on Saturday night and the meet didn't happen. Another time I went for an October meet, arrived, looked all around town, found no LSR cars, searched out Bill Woffington and found out the meet had been canceled and I wasn't notified. Stayed at the 6 that night and the next morning there was 4" of snow in town. Merry Christmas to all that participate in this history preserving site. Glenn Freudenberger*

Glenn: We'll look forward to your stories and Merry Christmas to all the LSR people in the Northwest.

4) *Richard, I would like to get a directory and be listed in it as long as other members respect the privacy of the information and NOT publish anywhere. I think we should all be able to contact one another, but I speak from nerve-wracking experience that dealing with volumes of unwanted, unsolicited and dangerous email is time consuming and annoying. Please continue to "bcc" the newsletters, it is the most respectful way to share information. Speedy Regards, "LandSpeed"*
Louise Ann Noeth

Louise: Will do.

5) *The 2007 Bonneville Speedweek will be on the National Geographic Channel Tuesday at 4:00 PM. Evelyn Roth*

Editor's notes: The following story is one that I did on Ak Miller and what I would like each of you to do on your own life. It can be longer, shorter or in a different format just so long as you are happy with your story and it gives details of your life in land speed and hot rodding history.

6) Gone Racin' ...With Ak Miller, Story by Richard Parks, photographs by Roger Rohrdanz

Ak Miller is a legend among racers. Which means that he doesn't need to embellish his exploits, for we do that for him. Ak's done about everything a racer wants to do. He's raced the dry lakes, Bonneville Salt Flats, Pike's Peak Hill Climb and road races in Italy and Mexico. Elected President of the SCTA (Southern California Timing Association) and Vice President of the NHRA (National Hot Rod Association), and a member of the Dry Lakes Hall of Fame, Ak has his share and more of auto racing honors.

Yet he is more than just an award winner, elected official or quick and speedy racer. It's the twinkle in his eye, entrancing smile, ready wit and charisma that gets you off balance and makes you fair game for this lively and charming fellow. Stories and tales surround him, and grow larger and more complex with the years. This has given rise to a colloquial expression, "that's Ak", meaning a story bunyunesque or too far fetched to be true.

But those who say this are mistaken for he has never had to create a tale; he has lived a life many of us only dream of. Born Akton Moeller, in Denmark, eighty-one years ago, his family immigrated to Southern California when he was just a small child. He worked in various garages as a youth and for Hannah Nixon, in their store in Whittier, back in the 1930's. Ak remembers seeing Richard Nixon studying at the old secretary desk in the store, and asking Ak to bring him a candy bar and to "help yourself as well." RMN was already a practiced politician!

Years later, when visiting the White House as a member of a racing contingent, Ak found himself teased and everyone doubted that he had ever known the President. Nixon strode in and grasped the hand of his old friend and said, "Ak, did you bring me a candy bar?"

He followed his brothers, Lawrence (Old Dad) and Zeke, to the dry lakes in the 1930's, and began a love affair with racing that lasts to this day. He was a charter member of the Roadrunners, one of the original car clubs that absorbed the remnants of the Muroc Timing Association, and formed it into the storied SCTA, in December of 1937.

Ak raced whatever was available, even an old derelict model T that was abandoned in the desert. He would remove the battery after racing the old heap, and was always surprised to find it still there when he returned for the next meet. It didn't set any records, but it gave his car club valuable points toward the season's championship trophy.

Ak had wanted to join the Army Air Corp during WWII, but was transferred to the Army and sent to Europe to fight in the Battle of the Bulge. Surrounded, in freezing weather, with no support, he was forced to fight merely to stay alive. He came upon a German officer cooking a steak, cut from the flank of a dying cow, and so overcome by hunger, one having food and the other without, that they shot at each other for the food's sake. Ak was quicker that day, winning the steak and a prisoner.

He was less fortunate when frostbite ended his war and sent him back to England, unsure whether they would amputate his feet. Returning from the war, Ak rejoined the SCTA and served as it's President, and with his close friend and fellow Roadrunner's club member, Wally Parks, served as Vice President of the newly formed NHRA.

But his heart was in Land Speed Racing and he returned to Bonneville, where over the years, the Miller/Lufkin/Carr team set and reset hundreds of records. In 1953-54, Miller campaigned a modified T-roadster in the Mexican Road Race. Quick on the turns and curves in the mountains, the little roadster would give up its lead in the straight-aways, but still placed 8th in 1953 and 5th in 1954.

Miller left his garage in the 1960's to work for Ford, and run in the Mobil Economy Runs. He was a terror at the Pike's Peak Hill Climbs, winning nine times in his class, with Ray Brock as his crew. He and Brock also competed in and won their class in the 1963 Baja 1000 Road Race. Still working at his garage, this legend of a man will stop what he is doing, sit you down, and regale you with another of his amazing stories, and as I've said before, they are all remarkably true. Gone Racin' is at Rnparks2@juno.com

Editor's notes: Ak Miller passed away in 2005.

Members: Jonathan Amo, Brett Arena, Henry Astor, Gale Banks, Glen Barrett, Lee Blaisdell, Warren Bullis, Gary Carmichael, Jerry Cornelison, G. Thatcher Darwin, Jack Dolan, Ugo Fadini, Robert Falcon, Rich Fox, Glenn Freudenberger, Don Garlits, Bruce Geisler, Stan Goldstein, Andy Granatelli, Walt James, Wendy Jeffries, Ken Kelley, Mike Kelly, Bret Kepner, Kay Kimes, Jim

Lattin, Mary Ann and Jack Lawford, Fred Lobello, Dick Martin, Ron Martinez, Tom McIntyre, Don McMeekin, Bob McMillian, Tom Medley, Jim Miller, Don Montgomery, Mark Morton, Paula Murphy, Louise Ann Noeth, David Parks, Richard Parks, Wally Parks (in memoriam), Eric Rickman, Willard Ritchie, Roger Rohrdanz, Evelyn Roth, Ed Safarik, Frank Salzberg, Dave Seely, Charles Shaffer, Mike Stanton, David Steele, Doug Stokes, Bob Storck, Zach Suhr, Pat Swanson, Al Teague, JD Tone, Jim Travis, Randy Travis and Jack Underwood.