

Society of LAND SPEED RACING HISTORIANS

Newsletter #5

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER: *To most historians, Land Speed Racing doesn't show up on the radar. Maybe we're cursed. The more we know, the more we don't know and that sets us off to search for even more. In the last couple of years I've gotten really serious about documenting our history. The earliest event on So-Cal lakes that I've run across so far took place in 1914. Joe Nikrent set a one mile AAA records of 108 mph driving a Buick. Pretty soon that will be 100 years. We've got lots of holes in between to fill in. Jim Miller*

Caption for the photo in the attachment: *A side view of Bill Burke's Bantam coupe at Bonneville in 1950. It was entered by Burke and the Dahm brothers, Jim and Tommy, in Class B Modified Coupe. The car was powered by a 249" Merc and ran 141.509 mph for second in class. In the upper left is the Bell Auto Parts tent, who sponsored the car. Mickey Thompson would later own the car and run it with twin engines. AHRF/David McConaughy Collection. Jim Miller*

1) *WHAT'S SHAV'S BIRTHDAY? Doug Stokes*

Doug: It's September 16, of course, for the newspaperman who gave car racing a great deal of fair coverage in the L. A. Times. Shav Glick is the grand old man of Southern California journalism and he wrote in a style that was plain and factual, with honest terms that hot rodders like.

2) *I would appreciate a copy of The Society of Landspeed Racing Historians Newsletter please. Gary Carmichael*

Gary: Welcome. Back issues of the Newsletter are on the way.

Editor's notes: The SCTA Minutes 1937-1948 book is coming along really well. The text and index are done and the photographs are being inserted into the text by my brother, David Parks. Dad is doing the captions. The book is a fascinating history of the beginnings of the SCTA. We hope to have it printed and available for sale by November 1, in time for the Open House on the 2nd at the Wally Parks NHRA Motorsports Museum. On the 7th of November, a Wednesday, the opening of the exhibit for the 70th Anniversary of the SCTA will start and last through the month.

3) *This came through fine and it is posted on the website. Thanks for the change. I do appreciate it. It is posted <http://www.oilstick.com/sportsfans/070905.htm>. I may have to change the coding as I use the date for the pobb also. As long as they stay in the right folder it won't be a problem. Evelyn Roth*

Evelyn: Thank you for posting the newsletters and the other racing articles on your website, www.oilstick.com. To the readers of the SLRH Newsletter, Evelyn has posted the Gas-Up Party and Dry Lakes Hall of Fame on her site. She also posts the Mendenhall Gas Pump Museum news and photos as well. She has posted obituaries and the Gone Racin' by-line column and biographies of various racers. Oilstick has been one of the mainstays among the landspeed racing websites available. We are grateful for Evelyn's efforts to keep news of landspeed racing in the public's view.

4) **Recreating a legendary car.** *A couple of years ago I was talking to Jim Lattin about old time lakes cars. I brought up the Bill Warth car that ran a Model B engine at Muroc in the '30's. Relating a little more car history, it ended up in Stu Hilborn's hands and was the first lakes car to set a 150 mph record.*

With a little arm twisting I talked him into doing a repro of the car since it was so significant. I was lucky enough to have some pictures of the car being modified to take the 21 stud flattie that it ran and also some build photos of the unique 4-carb intake manifold. That was the easy part. The first order of business was what kind of car had donated its chassis to Mr. Warth as a basis of the car.

As luck would have it, one day while snooping around at the Petersen Automobile Museum I spotted a '23 Chevrolet. Before you know it I'm crawling around on the ground under it. Yes, this was the chassis used for the car. After acquiring a frame the car took shape quickly at Lattin's workshop. As luck would have it, Stu agreed to be the consultant on the recreation. We had a meeting to discuss the car and Stu related that he had only run the car after the war (WWII). I went home and did a little digging through some old S.C.T.A documents.

Starting with Warth, I recorded every date and speed the car had run from day one until Stu sold the car to Gerry Grant of piston ring fame. At our next meeting I presented my findings. It's interesting how some dates and speeds jog the memory. Stu lit up and remembered bringing the car home on December 7, 1941 no less and running it in 1942.

At that time he was a paint chemist and mixed the paint for the car and a special blue color for the aluminum cylinder heads. He then went on about how he made the grill shell insert by cutting out every other row from a piece of stamped metal and filing for hours, all with a big grin on his face. The point of all this is that we used some old photos and documents to recreate a piece of history that would show the current and future generations what real hot rodding was about. We also got an 88 year old Stu Hilborn to be a 27 again and climb into his race car. That made my year. Jim Miller

Jim: My brother David and I were there for the unveiling and you are all to be commended for your efforts.

- 5) albatron@xxxx.com wrote: *I was listening to the Jerry Doyle show ... he had a stand in, some guy named Chris out of I THINK, Kansas City. Anyway this guy ranted about the expenditure, how thrill seekers put themselves at risk and create these scenarios. He then tried to say he's (Fossett) been unsuccessful many times and required searches in the past. I wasn't aware of that.*

First, I've been critical of Fossett after his RTW balloon flights for greedily going after record after record in any field he could find. A sore point for me are the glider records which have almost always set in the past by talented and dedicated individuals, not by deep pocketed types who traveled the world to remote areas for the unique conditions, bought the best coaches and equipment, and bulldozed his way into the record books.

Some of the altitude record he has set were once held in 1948 by Paul MacCready who set his world records as a college student in a pre-WWII Polish wooden glider. Fossett has barely exceeded a record set in 1961 by Paul Bickle in the Tehachapi hills, using his privately owned Schweizer tin glider, back when Bickle headed up Edwards flight test.

No exotic locales, no pressure suit, in fact a well outdated sailplane being flown to its max by an observant and well organized pilot. And almost fifty years later Fossett was able to exceed it by barely 4000 feet by going to Argentina and hiring a world class glider test pilot as "co-pilot and crew!" I heard he was trying to talk Rutan and Branson into letting him pilot the first civil orbital flight.

Craig Breedlove, whose jet powered car Steve apparently bought, is a unique breed of dreamer, self taught engineer, and fearless driver, whose greatest talent was his ability to get others to buy into his dream. He came close to beating Green and Noble to the sound barrier with a tenth of the funding. Compare the cost and true achievement of his orbital flights to the Rutan/Rutan/Yeager efforts.

Now, that being said, Fossett's solo balloon journeys were initially funded solely by Steve, and truly remarkable for their trail blazing and courage. I only recall his having to be rescued at sea once, maybe twice, and NO search effort was involved. Most importantly, while I question his flawed drive and ego, I admire his achievements and inspiration.

In summary, I have nothing but disgust for the current crop of media personalities, self appointed celebrities, politicians and the ilk whose SOLE talent is to dig up tawdry criticisms, wrong-headed evaluations, and downright lies relating to people they should be respecting. These rabble rousers' sad lives are filled with shrill rancor, merely to get them greater exposure. I have a hard time even viewing them with Christian pity. I truly pray for a good outcome. Bob Storck

Bob: Many of us were there in '97 when Breedlove, Noble and Green dueled in the desert to see which team would set the record. As amateur and professional historians, our job is to compile, save and restore all the documents that we can find. Eventually we will write on what we know and leave an archive to the next generation of historians and fans of land speed racing.

While we do form our own opinions, which are very necessary, in our hearts we hope that all the landspeeders, including the rich and not so rich alike, will come back safely. We hope Fossett is safe and that he runs for the record someday. Even with his money, it won't be an easy record to break. As for Noble, he relishes the idea of someone breaking his record or coming VERY close to it.

Craig and Sir Richard were good friends and often their 'duel' was beneficial to each side as it helped both of them. I saw the Brits come close to financial disaster at Black Rock. They had been reduced to peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and the ladies said that they could barely afford that. The 7 weeks had reduced us all to the breaking point.

Breedlove stepped forward with a statement to the press that his car was ready and the record was in his sights. The truth was that the car wasn't and most of us knew that, and we can't prove that he made the statement to help Noble. But after that statement to the press, donations from Europe jumped dramatically and made a great deal of difference to those struggling to stay and complete their task. In my opinion, Craig's presence at Black Rock was as much in support of his friend as it was to set the record himself. Landspeed racers are enemies of the clock, not of each other.

Members: Henry Astor, Glen Barrett, Warren Bullis, Gary Carmichael, Jack Dolan, Ugo Fadini, Robert Falcon, Rich Fox, Glenn Freudenberger, Bruce Geisler, Stan Goldstein, Walt James, Wendy Jeffries, Dick Martin, Ron Martinez, Tom McIntyre, Don McMeekin, Tom Medley, Jim Miller, Don Montgomery, Mark Morton, Louise Ann Noeth, David Parks, Richard Parks, Wally Parks, Erich Rickman, Roger Rohrdanz, Evelyn Roth, Ed Safarik, Frank Salzberg, Charles Shaffer, Mike Stanton, Doug Stokes, Bob Storck, Al Teague, JD Tone and Jack Underwood.