



# Fuel For Thought

Landspeed/Louise

## The First Of His Kind

Drivers come in all sizes, shapes and flavors out on the Bonneville Salt Flats. Women and men, both young and old, suit up as anxious rookies or seasoned veterans.

This gives land speed racing a velocity genre distinction within motorsports - a family of amateur speedsters who are at the same time the fastest folks on the planet.

Even the handicapped can realize their speed dreams on the salt. Racer George Voss may only have one-arm, but is a fierce competitor in his coupe. Johnnie Lee might spend his day in a wheelchair, but he taunts timing clocks with his modified roadster.

This season, quadriplegic Michael-Ryan Pattison, 24, and Randy Simmons, 30, intend to score a few "firsts" with a specially-equipped 1947 Hudson Race Truck with a natty three-inch chop.

tion (MRPF), [www.acureiscoming.com](http://www.acureiscoming.com), is sponsoring the development of the vehicle that will accommodate quadriplegic and paraplegic drivers. Driven by Pattison, the Hudson will be the first ever race vehicle actually controlled and driven by a quadriplegic having almost no mobility below the collarbone.

The pair also hopes to run some road races and appear at a few car shows in addition to land speed racing. The intent is to gain visibility for the MRPF foundation and to raise support for the creation of The Healing Center, a state-of-the-art restorative therapy center in the Seattle area.

It's impossible to imagine what challenges this young man deals with daily, but to have found a chink in the paralysis armor and exploit it to realize the dream of earning a time slip puts me squarely in his court of cheerleaders.

building prosthetics, designed and built a mouthpiece controller, similar to a dental retainer.

Pattison actuates the throttle by biting down - the harder the bite, the faster he goes. Steering is tongue-driven using three paddle sensors: left, right and center. Think of your tongue as a joystick. The sensors are progressive so the harder Pattison pushes the greater the degree of steering input in a given direction.

Sensitivity of all the controls is adjustable - such as dampening the timing of the actuation, all done hydraulically. Additional controls can be "ported over" at a later date, as MR becomes familiar and develops his driving skills.

"We are both in the vehicle and I added a safety override switch to disengage MR's controls and take over if necessary," said Simmons who is already working on a joy stick control to permit people with

a high level of safety, the run plan goes like this: Simmons handles brakes on the starting line and shifts the automatic tranny into gear.

When the starter gives them the signal to start, Simmons flips the switch giving driver-of-record, Pattison, control of the steering and throttle. In the lights, Simmons will release the parachute but allow Pattison to retain safe control of the truck as he brakes the Hudson to a stop.

"I have always loved cars and always wanted to race, this is my chance to live a dream," confessed Pattison, "I will practice until I get this right and maybe someday I can go 200MPH."

Simmons also designed and built Pattison a custom, tubular racing wheelchair color-matched to the Hudson that sports ape hanger style push handles, ostrich leather upholstery and secured a donation of forged ATP aluminum wheels that cor-



OK, OK, racing and paralyzed are not exactly compatible, I got that. It was a giant eyebrow raiser for me as well when word about a quad driving a racecar appeared in an email one day. If electronics weren't as advanced as they are, this column would be devoted to something else this month.

Michael-Ryan, or "MR" as friends call him, would be ecstatic if he could set a land speed record, but he doesn't want to be a charity case to get it; he wants to earn it fair and square.

That means he needs to demonstrate to any number of folks that it is possible, then safe and maybe get a "thumbs-up" for a timed-run without many spectators around.

"The Hudson Project is more than just a quick thrill ride," explained Pattison, whose foundation was established in 2006, "We're showing that where there is desire and willingness, there is a way to accomplish dreams no matter what hardships we face, that there is hope for the injured, not just life in a chair."

The Michael-Ryan Pattison Founda-

How does he plan to do that? Simmons has dropped a 7.3-liter turbo diesel in between the Hudson's frame rails that will crank out 1,000 horsepower. Mated to a custom race 4R100 ATF tranny attached to a nine-inch stock car-style floater rear end, the bio-fueled, environmentally friendly race truck is a trendsetter.

For the "whoa" end, a parachute and Wilwood brakes with six-piston calipers on 14" slotted rotors in the front with big four-piston calipers on the rear. Handling can be fine-tuned thanks to the adjustable QA1 shocks on all four corners.

Road racing cornering chores will be easier thanks to the Air Ride suspension using a one and one-half inch diameter solid sway bar and triangulated four-link suspension in the rear.

Geared for 230 MPH, they plan to break-in the driver much slower pushing up the numbers as MR gets comfortable driving. But how can a quad drive?

Simmons, who has extensive skills honed in the film and video industries working in animatronics, make-up and



different levels of paralysis to also drive the truck.

Simmons also designed a motorized aluminum containment seat that swivels to the outside of the cab, as well as a lift that will transfer the driver from wheelchair to race seat.

"Our goal is to have Michael-Ryan be the first Quadriplegic to ever set a land speed record and compete in road races," explained Simmons who holds a SCTA Class A 200MPH license, "In doing so, we hope to bring lots of publicity and awareness to his foundation so it can raise money to continue helping others living with paralysis."

Recognizing they need to demonstrate

respond with those on the 20-inch race truck rims. The lift and "race chair" stow in the pickup bed above the fuel cell behind the intercooler.

Simmons, President of Robotic Integrated Technology LLC, has created other devices to help disabled persons, and has plenty of experience building hot rods and race cars including the Xtreme Freedom modified roadster for Gil Gillis of Camarillo, California.

Gillis invited recovered quadriplegic Pat Rummerfield, who drove the White Lightning electric streamliner to a 245 MPH FIA World Record, to take a pass in his modified roadster. That's how Sim-

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Of course I immediately slowed as he pulled in behind me, lights flashing. I eased to the shoulder - busted.

The motor was still as I rolled down the passenger window. "Where are you heading - the track?" he said, trying not to laugh. Figuring there was no way out of this one, I chuckled, "No, just heading back from a Goodguys event in Del Mar. This is our giveaway car."

He knew Goodguys and was genuinely interested in how we run the giveaway program and asked a few questions before walking away with my license and registration. I watched in the mirror as he called my information in to the dispatcher and I thought about my insurance premium.

He soon returned to the window and paused before saying, "Kirk...slow down." I knew immediately that I'd somehow been let off the hook. The conversation then turned to the car. He wanted to know how much horsepower it had because he said it was "really rumbling" as I pulled it over. He said that I must be having a blast and that he'd have a hard time keeping it under the speed limit too. Thank you officer!

The rest of the drive home was pleasantly uneventful and left me in a great mood. After unpacking, I gave the car a nice bath in my driveway that afternoon. Even scrubbing the thousands of baked-on bugs seemed like fun because of my road trip-lifted spirits.

It was a great weekend made even better by the road trip on either end of it and I'd do it again in a heartbeat. So, want to make your Goodguys weekend even better? Get out there and drive 'em to the next event! 

## Good Tips Continued from Page 198

The absolute correct way is to use a set up bar as detailed above. That's why the pros do it, and why they can offer you such fine work. A clever and careful amateur can get it right too, if he has a straight housing to begin with, a good level, and a little patience. A club with a good machinist could even build their own loaner line up bar fixture for a few bucks and have the satisfaction of doing it themselves.

Having been through all the calculations above, I hope it's clear how a swap meet bargain can end up in disaster. You may be able to have special wheels made to get a wrong width axle to work, but I'd bet the "savings" will be used up. Better to mock up and calculate to get what you need and want the first time. Buy the wheels and tires based on your stock rear axle and wheel house if you are going conservative. Still buy them first if you are going wild and then have the housing made to suit. It's no more expensive to have the housing cut one length or another so you might as well get what you need

the first time. It's just one more thing that sets the noticed cars apart from the not-so-noticed ones. It's a subject we discuss often, since it is so often a cause of misunderstanding amongst rodders. Simple planning and thinking skills are still your most important tools in building a trick piece for the next Goodguys season!

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mons met Rummerfield and ideas for helping others began to foment.

Not long after Rummerfield introduced Simmons to Pattison, The Hudson Project was born. Gillis found the clapped-out Hudson and gave it to Simmons who "rehabbed" it for a road race and asked Pattison if he wanted to be his navigator. Before long, the two hit on the idea of land speed racing.

"The idea is to bring awareness not only to the MRPF, but also the disabled community," said Simmons, "That means anyone who has a disability, not just spinal cord, any form of paralysis." An inspirational vehicle in many senses of the word.

Pattison became a quadriplegic in May of 2005 the result of a diving accident with a grim prognosis that he would never again be able to breathe unassisted, move his limbs. Bucking the odds, he now breathes on his own, and in the last year, regained movement and muscle tone in his shoulders, biceps and triceps.

Now in its third year, MRPF has adopted the slogan "A Cure is Coming" to help other individuals with paralysis obtain the vitally important rehab (regain movement, build and maintain the muscle mass) needed to walk again, not covered by insurance.

Pattison's dad, Michael, wanted to find someone his son could talk to about how to "carpe diem" despite his injuries. That someone turned out to be World Land Speed Record holder Pat Rummerfield.

A high-speed car crash paralyzed Rummerfield, then 21, in 1974. Through sheer determination, he moved his big toe and after seventeen years of intensive rehabilitation he walks today with over 85% of his spinal cord destroyed at C-4.

A better kindred spirit Pattison will not find.

"Pat's awesome," enthused Pattison, "He is real supportive, he's all about rehabilitative therapies because that is how he learned to walk again. Because of him I worked for a month with Dr. John McDonald at the Kennedy Krieger Institute - he helped Christopher Reeves regain movement."

In 2008, MRPF donated \$70,000 - \$20,000 to a quadriplegic in the Northwest for specialized rehabilitation equipment. The other \$50,000 was donated to NextStepsNW, an exercise recovery center to fund others who would not have the opportunity to receive the extensive

restorative therapies.

"Many people spend their whole lives searching for their own purpose," stated Pattison, "My purpose in life is now driven by creating a better life for others. I must believe that God has placed me in this situation because he saw it as the best possible vehicle for me to fulfill a task."

I wonder if I could gather such interior strength if faced with similar mental, physical and emotional struggles. I sincerely hope the land speed racing sanctioning bodies extend as much support as they can to this effort. I realize safety is paramount, but I also think Michael-Ryan Pattison will make a fine addition to the sport of land speed racing if we give him a bit of help.

For Pattison, more than a mere speed deed, a time slip represents an enormous opportunity to offer a measure of optimism to those who despair about life in a chair. See you on the salt, kid. God Speed.

Note: Photojournalist Louise Ann Noeth is the authoress of the award-winning book, *Bonneville: The Fastest Place on Earth*, a complete historical review of the first 50 years of land speed racing now in its 7th and final printing. Publisher MBI has informed Noeth when the current inventory is sold the book will not be reprinted. For more details and to order, go to: [www.landspeedproductions.biz](http://www.landspeedproductions.biz). 



Goodguys PPG Dream Car Pick -  
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### TECH INFO

**Owner:** Gary Bunker  
Las Vegas, NV

**Year:** 1940

**Make:** Ford Coupe

### Engine:

Stock 2000 Corvette LS1, custom painted covers, 2.5" mandrel bent stainless exhaust.

### Drivetrain:

4L65 E trans, Ford 9" with True Track and 3.50 gears.

### Chassis:

'40 Ford frame, powder coated, Heidt's Super Ride II IFS, narrowed control arms, TCI parallel leaf rear, narrowed power R&P, Wilwood disc brakes.

### Wheels/Tires:

17x7 and 18x8 Foose wheels, 205/50/17 and 255/50/18 Toyo Proxies.

### Body:

1940 Ford coupe. Frenched headlights, grille raised 1/2", hood wedge cut 1", corners rounded, drip rails shaved and replaced with 1/4" rod, one piece windshield, Lexus taillights, removed vent windows, rockers built under doors, straightened running boards, molded rear fenders, PPG Cashmere and custom mixed Viva la Red.

### Interior:

Custom fiberglass dash, Grant billet banjo wheel, Dolphin gauges, '96 Lincoln Mark VIII seats, custom rear bench with storage, two-tone leather by Holcomb Upholstery.

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gifts a sweet contentment lend, but only God can give a friend!"

Years ago an English publication offered a prize for the best description of a friend. Among those submitted here are a few I think are tops: "One who multiplies joys, and divides grief." "One who understands our silence." "A watch which beats true for all time and never runs down." But here is the definition that won the prize: "A friend - the one who comes in when the whole world has gone out."

As I write this Good News article focusing on Al Casatico, I in no way am attempting to present to you an individual who didn't have his own human failures. There was only One such man who has ever walked on this earth, and you'll remember they crucified Him on a cross. At the same time, in my presence, Al was a wonderful friend and a tremendous blessing to this ministry of CRA and will truly be missed. Al proved to be "one who comes in when the whole world has gone out."

Are you interested in either sending your son/grandson, or a young boy age 16 - 19 of your acquaintance to a CRA Hot Rod Camp in '09 in either Columbus, OH or Rogers, AR? Or, perhaps you would consider sponsoring a young guy? Call CRA for more info: CRA, PO Box 309, Valley Springs, CA 95252; 209-786-0524; [cra@intgerity.com](mailto:cra@intgerity.com). 

## Flashing Back Continued from Page 216

briefly alive, and I swam the best I could to get to that float, and back, because I did not want to die ignorant.

*Jacket & Plaque: Portland Car Clubs of the Fifties.* Big, 272 pages, many photos. Paperback. \$24.95 (plus \$2.50 S&H). Albert Drake, P.O. Box 66874, Portland, OR 97290 or [www.flatoutpress.com](http://www.flatoutpress.com). 