



Fuel For Thought

Landspeed Louise

Many Indy Stars Revere The Salt

Astonishingly, until this year, I had never covered “the greatest spectacle”, aka the Indy 500. As a veteran motorsports journalist, my brain would have exploded to just be a spectator, so I put together a little track lapping activity.

The idea was for land speed, drag, jet and rocket racer Paula Murphy, aka “Miss STP” to reprise her milestone role as the first woman ever allowed to drive a race car upon the venerable brickyard oval. Without Andy Granatelli, Chevrolet Motor Division, the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Public Relations and Photography staff, the deed would not have been done.

It was in the early ‘60s that Granatelli brought the howling 800HP+ Novi engine to Indy. Murphy climbed in distinguishing herself with a few perfect laps before stopping in the pits to touch-up her lipstick.

The 167.28 CID STP/Novi V8 had a revised 2-stage centrifugal supercharger with bore and stroke of 3.2 x 2.6 in. The engine never found its way into the Indy winner's circles, but few engines were as celebrated in motorsports.

After a quick photo session under the Gasoline Alley Sign we moved onto pit row for a few more shots. Lyn St. James stopped by to lend her support and then it was time for Paula's laps.

She eased the 2010 silver Camaro turned out in its “500” colors out of the pit lane chute making for the middle of turn one. I marveled at how effortlessly Murphy reconnected with the track although it had been decades since last she was upon its banked surface. The laps were perfect every time.

Decades ago, it was commonplace for people, cars and parts to move among various motorsports segments and I wondered how many “Indy Car” big names had experienced the speed lure of Bonneville.

A call to LSR historian and sweetheart of a guy, Jim Miller, yielded a treasure trove of names. Miller's father, Eddie Miller Sr., was not only an Indy Car driver, but also a AAA Contest Board observer for many Bonneville-based World Land Speed Record runs.

Begin personal segue: Jim, thanks buddy, but forget those damn archives for

awhile and get your lakester running! End personal segue.

Let's start with names that most LSR folks know, but may not realize they had ties to Indiana oval. Those people that have a year and speed in parentheses indicates Bonneville 200MPH Club membership.

For instance, cheerful and always charming Leroy Newmayer (1953 -211.390MPH) built engines for A.J. Foyt and was Tony Adamowicz's crew chief at the 1970 Indy 500. Multiple speed record

other car was a rear engine.

Reaching way back, we find my all-time land speed racing hero, Frank Lockhart who, at the 1926 Indianapolis 500, was a relief driver for Peter Kreis's eight cylinder supercharged Miller. He won the race becoming the fourth rookie ever to do so. Lockhart, you will remember, together with the Stutz Automobile Company, broke World Land Speed Record in 1926 recording an average of 164.28 MPH.

Ab Jenkins, the “king of Bonneville racers”, entered a Studebaker-powered Rigling driven by Tony Gulotta in the 1931 Indy 500. Son Marvin Jenkins did some NOVI test-driving at Indy.

Danny “on-the-gas” Ongais qualified for a dozen 500s and also drove a new 1969 Mustang on the salt in 1968 for Mickey Thompson. Ongais helped set National and International Class C records endurance records averaging nearly 160 MPH in wet, slippery salt for 500 miles.

Lakes racer Chuck Daigh tried, but wasn't fast enough to qualify for the 500 a couple of times. Stu Hilborn's Fuel Injector has 34 wins at the Indianapolis 500.

Barney Navarro attempted to get one of his cars qualified for the Indy 500 for three years in the late 1960s, but handling and driver problems kept the car off the starting grid. Powered by a twin turbocharged 199 cubic inch Rambler engine with Navarro-designed mechanical fuel injection, it put out over 700 horsepower.

Mechanical genius Bruce Crower who ran many forward-thinking vehicles on the salt was invited to work on the Offy-powered Dean Van Lines Indianapolis racing car with Jimmy Bryan in 1954. They qualified on the front row and finished second. Six years later, working on Jim Rathmann's team, they won the 1960 race and was again working with the winners as a member of Graham Hill's team, and a final time in 1967 with the A.J. Foyt team.

Fred Carrillo, who ran the lakes and lost a leg in a Bonneville crash, owned racecars and had an entry in the Indianapolis 500 for 10 years, never failing to qualify with partner Doug Champlin.

Indy 500 winners A.J. Foyt, Wilber Shaw, Eddie Meyer, Sam Hanks and Bobby Unser have all tried their land speed

racing luck with mixed results.

Indy Ace Tony Bettenhausen drove on the salt in 1955 setting 18 International Records in the F Class (1.500 cc) records in an OSCA sports car with c-driver Marshall Lewis.

Among other Indy racers who also drove on the salt you'll find such names as: Dan Gurney, Rex Mays, Jack McGrath, Cliff Bergere, Wilbur D'Alene, Bud Rose, Manny Ayulo, Billy Scott, Joe Nikrent, Dempsey Wilsom, Jimmy Jackson.

While not Indy drivers, many Indy celebs got in their early speed licks at the dry lakes. They are: Sandy Belond and Frank Curtis, whose cars later won the Indy 500; Lou Fagole was an Indy car owner; Bob Estes drove on Muroc before World War II then sponsored cars at Indy. Indy whizz kids Jim Travers and Frank Coon raced at the lakes. Effervescent Louie Senter brought cars to the lakes and the salt.

Metal master, Quinn Epperly, noted for his Spirit of America hand-formed aluminum bodywork, built a variety of Indy car bodies.

How about the mechanics? A great many brickyard wrench-spinning notables also distinguished themselves on the salt, many setting records. They include: Harry Miller who designed the record-setting Gulf-Miller; Jean Marcenac, Chief Mechanic on NOVI; Jerry Eisert ran Muroc and was a top USAC mechanic in the 1960s, the same for Indy chief mechanic Pete Clark.

Phil Remington, who can build or fix anything on any race car, started at the lakes and went to Indy with Gurney's Eagles; Indy mechanic Willie Utzman; Bonneville racer Dick Russell built Indy engines for Parnelli Jones.

Stewart Van Dyne built engines for lakes and Bonneville cars as well as an Indy-winning motor for Roger Penske.

Johnny Moore, the Firestone representative who brought race tires to the salt that significantly improved the breed, worked the garages and suites at Indy.

Did you know that Carroll Shelby set endurance records in an Austin-Healy at the salt? He later brought a turbine car to Indy with Ken Wallace.

Tommy Lee and Mal Ord drove at the lakes and when Lee entered a car at Indy Ord was his Chief mechanic. Lakes racers Hal and George Robson both went to Indy to drive and George won in 1946.

You can win a race anywhere in the world, but it is only one race and unless you win every one after that, your achievement is eclipsed by those who



setter Mike Nish (1996 - 304.700MPH) competed in four CART races.

Ernie Immerso (1956 - 212.900MPH) was involved with the Ford Indy engines, crewed for Jimmy Bryan at the '54 Indianapolis 500 and worked for Carroll Shelby as the engine-shop foreman during the '60s.

Mickey Thompson (1958 - 266.860MPH) the ultimate salt warrior, built a number of Indy cars during his storied racing career. He was, in 1962, the first to have a rear engine, aluminum stock block Buick V8 car qualify at the Indy 500 with Dan Gurney driving.


Rear engine again in 1963, but now powered by Small Block Chevrolet, M/T had two cars qualify. The drivers were Duane Carter who qualified 15th and Al Miller who qualified 31st.

M/T managed two more qualifiers in 1964. The cars were driven by rookie driver Dave MacDonald who qualified 14th and Eddie Johnson who qualified 24th. There was a crash on the first lap and MacDonald was killed.

By 1967 it was an all-new theme for M/T at Indy. One was a front engine all wheel drive and all wheel steer, and the

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come after you. At Bonneville, the measure is made against the clocks, not your contemporaries. Some records stand for decades and that is why a land speed record set upon the Bonneville Salt Flats is a pedigree that many Indianapolis racers decided they just had to have.

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. 

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thing is fast!" he said, reaching out with a crisp \$100 dollar bill.

With a sly smile, I grabbed it, said "Thanks, good race." and slipped it into my shirt pocket. Danny pulled open the passenger door and slid in, his grin as wide as mine. The "poor kid" and his "massaged" big block had just pulled off the greatest "pride" win.

Chris Hedum
Casselberry, Florida


Coming soon: *Accidents & Incidents*. Available now: *Recollections, Regrets & Random Acts*...stories of the past from the hobby's most well known men. Roger's previous two books: *Fast Cars, 4-speeds & Fist-fights* and *Bangin' Gears & Bustin' Heads*, - about those crazy car days in the 1960s, is still available. To order each or all 3, go to www.RAJetter.com. 


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Here is the finished Electro Vette. The taillights were made with red reflective film, available from most craft stores. The parachute was carved from wood, sprayed flat black and detailed with a "REMOVE" tag. Notice the Exhaust Pipes? They are there just for fun!

In my next article I will show you how to do some scratch building and make a supercharged slant-4 engine!




My web site has many of my models, featuring the Goodguys feature models and several models from the 1970's, displayed with complete descriptions. The address is: www.sonic.net/~joymkrs/dahm

Modeling questions? Email them to me at: dahms@sonic.net. I will be happy to answer your questions by email and some of your questions may appear in future columns! Be sure to mention Goodguys in your emails! 

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give you when welding, cutting, or grinding under a car. Who hasn't had a hot weld "berry" find your ear, not to mention your eye?

Finally, be sure to have a second set of eyes review your work. This is done on racecars and aircraft, since the original technician may "assume" that a certain procedure has been followed, and that all fasteners are of the right type, length, tightened properly, and actually in place. Paint and powder coating can load up in drilled holes, so check those particularly after a couple hundred miles. It's not uncommon for parts fastened into tapers, like tie rod ends, radius rod mounts, and ball joints to need retightening after initial assembly. That little bit of looseness, which develops as the paint wears away, has led to shakes and rattles that are hard to trace. It's easy to think that since they are typically secured with cotter pins, they can't get loose. That second set of eyes may not make the same assumption. 

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the Camaro's brute strength down what can, at certain times, end up being a tricky track surface.


With his 218.04 mph on the asphalt track in Sacramento and his first-ever career Pro-Mod win at Super Chevy, Fontana, CA he is obviously knocking on dad's door! At the time of this writing, Marc has now made a personal-best test and tune pass of 6.39 @ 222.77 mph at Infineon Raceway which took place one year to the day from his first test run at this same track. Without a doubt this is an incredible run that Marc made driving a Pro Mod car. And, believe it or not, there's still more that's available in this Hemi!

With your love for drag racing and street rodding it's well worth your time to check in often to the Goodguys website to find out about upcoming Goodguys events and to check the most recent stats on Marc and crew who are determined to be a team "to be reckoned with" at the drag strip.

As I look at this father and son relationship, I see many similar things that I listed I learned from my dad, (excluding, sadly, car stuff!) and I see several scriptural truths recorded in the book of Proverbs that help to identify a little of what has taken place in their relationship. Just a few are these found in the O.T. book of


Proverbs. Proverbs 4:1 helps to focus on what is an ultimate desire in a good father and son relationship. "Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive that you may gain insight..." while Proverbs 10:1 as well as repeated in 15:20 that reads, "A wise son makes a glad father..." I believe to this end, Marc has done that very thing, not only with his dad Gary, but with his mom Marilyn as well.

As for the next generation, might the picture of Marc & Jess Ann's son Grant give us hope for yet another generation hooked on motorsports coming up in the footsteps of Grandpa Gary and Marc? I think so, which leaves us with a pretty confident understanding that "It 'Runs' in the Family?"

Call about space availability for your son or grandson to attend a CRA Hot Rod Camp next year. An autographed copy of Dale & Jeannie's book, *From Hot Rods to Heaven* with b/w photos of rods and customs is available by writing (\$10+postage) CRA, PO Box 309, Valley Springs, CA 95252. (209) 786-0524; cra@integrity.com; www.christianrodders-racers.org. 

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of ice-cold Kool-Aid. Then my mother went into the house and came out with a big bowl of Loganberries that she'd picked in the neighbor's yard: they were cold from the refrigerator.

Then my father went into the house and came out with an insulated package. It held a quart of vanilla ice cream, frozen hard by the lumps of dry ice that surrounded it. Almost as exciting as the berries and ice cream was the dry ice, which was rare and puzzling. It gave off a white smoke, and it burned the skin: how could something be so cold it burned? I like to drop a piece in a glass of water and watch the smokey bubbles rise. I assumed dry ice was some sort of marvelous wartime invention, like radar, sonar and the atom bomb. It was something of the future, and it was about as modern as we were going to get. 

The Age of Hot Rods. 198 pages, 91 photos, paperback. \$39.95 (plus \$2.50 S&H) - signed. Albert Drake, P.O. Box 66874, Portland, OR 97290 or www.flatoutpress.com.



Goodguys East Coast Pick - cont'd from Pg. 181

TECH INFO

Owner: Yvon Landry
Montreal, Quebec

Year: 1953

Make: Studebaker Commander

Engine:

GM LT1 350, EFI, Hedman headers, Ron Francis ignition

Drivetrain:

4L60E trans with a Lokar Shifter

Chassis:

Stock, S10 front clip, customized rear with a triangulated Camaro rear and a Chevy S10 differential.

Wheels/Tires:

17x8 and 17x9.5" American Racing Salt Flats.

Body:

1953 Studebaker Commander, custom firewall and radiator shroud, one-off rear pan, 2002 Camaro silver.

Interior:

1962 Studebaker Hawk GT dash, Auto Meter gauges, Billet Specialties steering wheel, '98 Isuzu seats, red leather upholstery.



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