

Fuel For Thought

with "Landspeed Louise" Ann Noeth

The Drumroll

This column is about speed. Damned silly thing this speed, no matter how fast one might go, there is always faster to be found. This speed thing is a life-altering affliction, an itch incapable of being scratched. It draws in the young and the old and holds them tightly to the inexhaustible grindstone of discovering the perfect gear ratio, responding to the perfect fuel flow mixture and perfecting shifting prowess.

Filled with childlike, dazzling wonder thinking about the great white dyno, I muse about once again bearing witness to another fanfare of the common motor head (all due apologies to Mr. Copeland, but I am sure he would agree with the analogy). A gathering place where dreams rise, fall, explode and expand in dazzling brilliance against an eon old natural backdrop succinctly molded for just such a tryst.

There are always more folks heading into speed's clutches, succumbing to its heady allure, but not always to race. In the past five years I have noticed that the spectator lines have steadily swelled from pits to starting line – not just on the frantic opening weekend, but enduring into mid-week, albeit thinning as the week unfolds, but there all the same.

More are coming to watch the brave, the crazy, the curious; the unsure who try to slap the time clocks like no one has swatted them before. It's why they all come, every year, like clockwork, like planets on a elliptical journey around the sun they come, blazing bright on the horizon for a short period of time, giving all they have to whatever they have and hoping it is enough. If not, there is always next year to console them. These are the perpetually optimistic who refuse to be cowed by a timepiece, or the failure of a chump-change part.

Whether after your first triple dig-

it time slip, or banging on 400's door, the thrill is the same: getting there is one amazing journey. Congrats to all who try and win! For those who try and fail, but return another to try again: I love you. You are the essential embodiment of the American "can do" spirit. Either way, speed people are and have been for decades, part of the reason this nation exudes innovation, creativity and practical expression of velocity. In other words, good 'ole Yankee ingenuity.

It is for all these reasons and more that the Peterson Automotive Museum is hosting the first major exhibition devoted to the celebration of speed. Entitled: Speed, The World's Fastest Cars, the show features some of the fastest and most unique Land Speed Racing vehicles of all time. Opening in the museum's Grand Salon February 7, 2004 and runs through June 1st, visitors will be able to walk through the history of Land Speed Racing viewing some of the most famous cars to have set speed records. There will be incredible vintage photography, wind tunnel models, artifacts and memorabilia from the past to the present. And don't be surprised if you meet some Speed Racers while enjoying the exhibit. This is worth coming out to the left coast to see.

Special thanks needs to go to those racers, who had the time to pick up a camera, capture history in the making and then preserve those moments until today. They include: Lynn Yakel, George Callaway, Kay Kimes and Will Scott. Sidewinders President Ronald Main deserves a nod of the brain bucket for lobbying museum officials about the importance of such an exhibit. The Sidewinders Car Club is coordinating the event, but member/racer/SCTA Official/funny hat man Jim Miller gets the credit for knuckling down and researching and

writing the history of each car involved.



Here is an exclusive peek at the exhibit and vehicles slated for display:

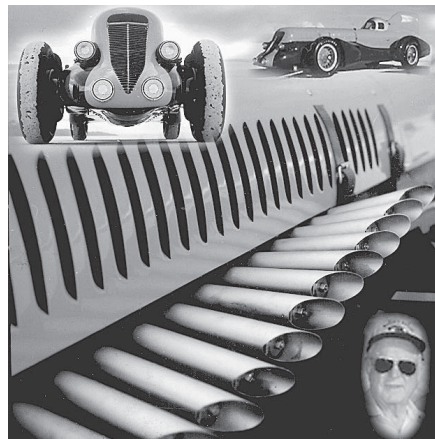
The Formative Years 1898-1920s

1903 Ford Arrow

Built by Henry Ford, this was one of the first American expressions of pure speed machine. Built with an 18.7-litre four-cylinder engine nearly ten feet long that produced 70 horsepower. Ford once explained driving the car at speed, "Going over Niagara Falls would have been but a pastime after a ride in one of them." Also driven by Barney Oldfield, this was the car that put the then down-on-his-luck-racing bicyclist on the motor racing career path.

The Monster Car Era & Birth of Hot Rods 1930-1940s

World Land Speed Record Holder Mormon Meteor



The last racecar ever built by Augie Duesenberg, owner and driver David "Ab" Jenkins sent his then 16-year-old son Marvin to Indianapolis to help build the car. The car set many endurance records and in the late 1900's Marvin, now 71, undertook a massive restoration project that culminated with the running of the car once again out on the Bonneville Salt Flats in September 2003. Powered by a Curtiss Conqueror aviation engine, the car is a spectacular speed artifact.

Daytona Beach Harley-Davidson

Ridden by Joe Petrali who started motorcycle racing a few months before his 18th birthday; he was known for his leather pants, puttees, a surplus WWI Balloon-Jumpers Helmet, spit-shined dress shoes, spotless black and white sweaters, and a shirt and tie while racing. Among his nearly 70 national victories, Petrali was the 1925 National Board Track Championship, eight-time National Hill Climb Champion that included 31 consecutive wins. The bike featured was the one Petrali established the world motorcycle speed record of 136.183 mph at Daytona Beach on March 13, 1937. The record stood for 11 years.

A-V8 Highbay Roadster

A 1929 Ford Model A roadster body on 1932 Ford frames was built by Racer Brown and was one of the first "hot rods" that originated out of southern California in the mid-1930's through the late 1940's and represents the very early days of automotive high performance. Fitted with 4-cylinder engine with Riley 2-port OHV cylinder head, dual Winfield carburetors, model A distributor ignition, trunk-mounted battery, tubular exhaust header and chrome radiator support rods.

So-Cal Speed Shop Belly Tank Lakester

Alex Xydias, using \$100 borrowed from his mother, opened the first SO-CAL Speed Shop in Burbank, California in 1946. His shop's V8-60 belly tank lakester clocked 136 mph in 1948. He teamed up with Dean Batchelor to develop a purpose-built streamliner powered by an Edelbrock-equipped Merc' V8, the liner ran 210 mph in 1950 setting a new Land Speed class record. The belly tank went on to win six awards at the 1952 Bonneville Nationals when Alex clocked 198.34 mph.

The High Performance Cultural Revolution and Jet Age 1950-1960s

The Pierson Brothers '34 Ford Coupe

Bob and Dick Pierson built this Salt Flats Record Holder with a 267 CID Flathead V8. It has been called "The best known coupe in hot rod history". First built in 1949, this great looking car was chopped and channeled with a "Sprint Car" nose. The flathead Ford V8 was built with the assistance of Edelbrock's Bobby Meeks.

Beatty Belly-Tank Lakester

Tom Beatty built and drove a belly tank that left its mark at Bonneville as the fastest ever time for an open

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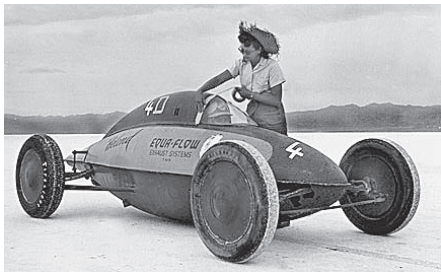
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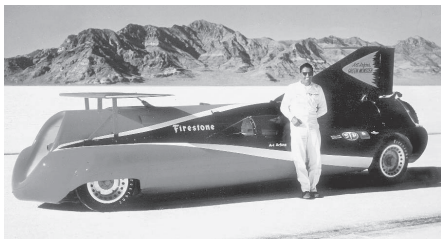


wheeled car at 188.809 in 1951. The 'go fast or blow up' car did exactly that for the next 13 years blowing up 7 engines in '53, being the first over 200 in '55 and trashing 4 more engines in 1956. Switching from the Flathead to Olds power in 1958, he continued to go fast and in 1963 ran 236.51

1920 Indian Motorcycle Streamliner

Burt Munro was born in 1899 in Invercargill New Zealand. Riding his handbuilt streamlined 1920 Indian at the 1967 SCTA Bonneville Nationals speed trials he set a two-way average of 183MPH and earned the fastest motorcyclist of the meet honors. Working in his tiny shed, designing and building his very own parts on near "zero" budget, he had single handedly enabled the Indian to go faster than contemporary bikes. The motorcycle modified with homemade parts was older than competing riders yet had beaten new motorcycles with factory engineering staffs and by the powerful American speed-parts aftermarket.

World Land Speed Record Green Monster Jet Car



Built and driven by Art Arfons, the Green Monster is a three-time holder of the World Land Speed Record. Powered by a General Electric 15,000lb thrust J-79 jet engine taken from a B-58 Hustler military bomber, the car's final record speed of 576.553 set on November 7, 1965 by the then 49-year-old driver stood for only 8 days.

The Amazing Amateur Speed Centurions 1970-1980s

The Redhead Streamliner

One of the most famous streamliners in the history of land speed racing and one of the most photographed, thanks to its wild body design, is also known as the "Coke bottle." Originally an unfinished project of car builder Romeo Palamides, it

was finished by the team of Don Hammon, driver Bob McGrath and Roger Whipp. It appeared for the first time in 1962, was owned and raced by different teams for thirty years. The Redhead set innumerable records in several different classes, pushed by a number of different engines and was retired in 1991.

World Land Speed Record Holder Moon Eyes Streamliner

Fred Larsen and Don Cummins home-built car first ran in 1966. By 1970 they had captured 12 National and International records in different classes set by Frank Lockhart, the Austin-Healey, MG and Mercedes-Benz Automobile Companies. Fred as driver set the retired car's last record in 2000, this and his 3.0 Litre record of 307.977 from 1992 still stand.

World Land Speed Record Holder Sprit of 76 Streamliner of Al Teague

Elwin 'Al' Teague got hooked on Bonneville in 1967, and by 1972 had driven 268 M.P.H. in a highboy roadster. In 1974 he began construction of a Lakester (an open-wheeled vehicle) on a 160-wheelbase. After 17 years, on August 21, 1991, the almost 28-foot long Lakester turned Streamliner hits a top speed of 432.692 M.P.H. and averages 409.986 M.P.H. in the mile to break the 26 year-old class record and simultaneously establishes a World Record.

Multi-Generational Speedsters 1990s-Current Day

Current World Land Speed Record Holder TEAM Vesco Turbinator

After more than 30 years of racing at Bonneville, brothers Rick and Don Vesco conceived this car in 1981. It first ran in 1988 and by 1991 had sped over 370 M.P.H. with twin Offenhauser engines before they installed a gas turbine motor out of a military helicopter. Adapting the turbine to a wheel-driven configuration (no thrust advantage), the car set national records in 1997 and 1999. Don pulverized the 37-year old International Speed Record for wheel driven vehicles on October 18, 2001 driving to a speed of 458.44 MPH and brought the World Record home to the United States for the first time in the sport's history.

Current World Land Speed Record Holder Easyriders motorcycle streamliner

The Joe Teresi owned, Dave Campos ridden and Easyriders Magazine readers sponsored motorcycle showed up at Bonneville in 1989 and ran 300+ breaking the AMA record by 16 MPH. Later the two 91 Harley motors had the bike past 320 when a tire blew, it

took a 1/2 mile of flips to stop. The next year, in 1991, it took another crash, 23 runs and 16 days of bad luck to become the Fastest Motorcycle on Earth with a record of 322.150 MPH.

Lightning Rod Electric Streamliner

Setting his sights on the 1975 electric car record, Ed Rannberg began his quest in September 1992. The liner hit the salt in late '93 for shakedown runs in excess of 164MPH. Ed's passing from Cancer put a damper on the project until his son Randy rekindled it, and made his dad's dream come true with a record of 213.084 in 1997.

FlatFire Streamliner

Ron Main's Flatfire started life as a Lakester 15 years ago before morphing into a Streamliner. After crashing and being rebuilt, it became the Worlds Fastest Flathead powered car. The engine started life as a 1946 cast iron Ford Flathead that now produces 700+ horsepower thanks to modern technology. On August 21, 2003 Ron set an astonishing new record at Bonneville with a speed of 302.674

Kugel Pontiac Firebird

Jerry Kugel and Red Holmes were the first to top 200 plus mile-per-hour barrier in 1968 with an unblown highboy gas roadster. Sons Joe and Jeff both topped 250 mph in dad's later roadster. The Kugel's purchased the '92 Pontiac Trans Am of salt racers Lionel Pitts and Dave McDonald and in went a Mike LeFevers built gas-drinking twin-turbocharged Mi-Tech 368 cubic-inch small-block engine with Hillborn electronic fuel injection that, in 1999, became the first American stock-bodied car to surpass 300 bills with Joe Kugel driving.

Joint Venture Semi Tractor - Worlds Fastest Production Diesel

What else can be said about a semi-tractor that exceeds 200 MPH? You gotta see it to believe it!

Rocket Ranger

In October 2001, the Rocket Ranger competed at the Bonneville Salt Flats during the SCTA World Finals to set a new land speed record of 205.08 mph. making it the world's fastest gas-powered pickup truck. Built by SPAL Advanced Technologies with help from Ford Motor Company, the truck was driven by Mark Bill, a chief program engineer the Ford.

General Motors Saturn Ion "Red Line"

The quad coupe raced into the record book at the Bonneville Salt Flats on Oct. 17, 2003, establishing a new mark in the G/Blown Fuel Altered class at 212.684 mph. Based on the new factory-built ION Red Line sport

compact and powered by a turbocharged 2.0-liter Ecotec four-cylinder engine, eclipsed the previous 183.086 mph record set in 2001 by a Honda Civic by nearly 30 mph.

2003 Ecotec lakester

This tube chassis, composite body lakester is a design experiment of what a modern belly-tank land speed record car could look like. Designed by Frank Saucedo, director of GM's California advanced design studio and the SoCal Speed Shop. Mounted transversely is the 200 horsepower supercharged version of GM's 2.0 liter Ecotec four-cylinder engine mated to a standard four-speed automatic transaxle to drive the rear wheels. It has never been raced.

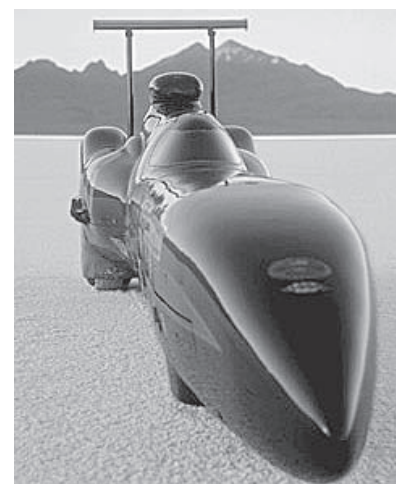
For more information:



Petersen Automotive Museum
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www.petersen.org

Louise

Columnist's confession: The December Fuel For Thought column was a report on the USFRA's September World of Speed event at Bonneville. Normally, I take all the photos that appear in this column, but was unable to attend the event and asked several folks to help out with images. USFRA members Cris Shearer, Ron Christensen and Dennis Nelson provided the photos, Ellen Wilkensen was the Utah coordinator and Dan Wright acted as the Utah production house. What is phenomenal about their labor is that it all came together in 72 hours in order to make the print deadline. Sadly, all these names were omitted in the final copy, so here, months later, I wanted to acknowledge their Herculean work effort and apologize for the error.



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