

## Fuel For Thought

with "Landspeed Louise" Ann Noeth

# Parking Speed

Coventry Transport Museum

Hurling Fast Notice to Speed Freaks: you may now take a supersonic ride courtesy of the world's fastest man, Andy Green, ThrustSSC and the Coventry Transport Museum in England. Part of the new "Spirit of Speed" gallery, the 763 MPH virtual ride simulation is a sensory rush that gives you a taste of emerging physical forces while bursting through the sound barrier without nasty g-forces, but incorporates the air buffeting and steering corrections Green made while drifting sideways at 700+ MPH.

Similar to Disneyland's interactive "Star Tours" attraction with three exceptions, it is all very realistic and includes two supersonic booms! My British-born husband, who witnessed the SSC under power, also ride-tested the attraction and says you'll get the best ride sitting in the front row.

Then there is the wild steering test rig for Thrust SSC that team mechanical engineer Glynne Bowshere created for a ratty and rusty old Mini-Cooper to investigate the fork lift style steering approach on the twin rear wheels. When this thing drove on the streets it had to be a hysterical sight.

You'll also see many of the other support vehicles, and the actual Pit Station communication trailer where RAF Squadron Leader Jayne Millington did as brilliant a job of keep communications straight with hundreds of people as Green did driving.

Throughout the gallery the museum staff worked closely not only with Andy Green but Richard Noble and the ThrustSSC team, to create a unique land speed record experience for visitors. Starting with an audiovisual show telling the story of the World Land Speed Record up to ThrustSSC, visitors can watch video interviews with key ThrustSSC team members explaining their roles and responsibilities.

During my last visit to England, I met up with the world's fastest man at a quaint pub just outside London for a little conversation and fine British ale. Green explained the supersonic ride simulation is as close to the real thing as could be created with the biggest problem being convincing the engineers to tone down the bumps, jerks and sudden moves to develop an accurate motion accompanied by actual visuals so that visitors can experience that unique moment in history when ThrustSSC broke the sound barrier.

"They really had a hard time understanding that the ride wasn't so harsh," said Green, "I've put in many hours working with museum staff to ensure that visitors have the best possible time in the gallery." Echoing Green sentiments, several other ThrustSSC team members have told me that the exhibit does them proud.

Spending two months out on the powdery playa with the teams, I came to admire just how dang precise Green

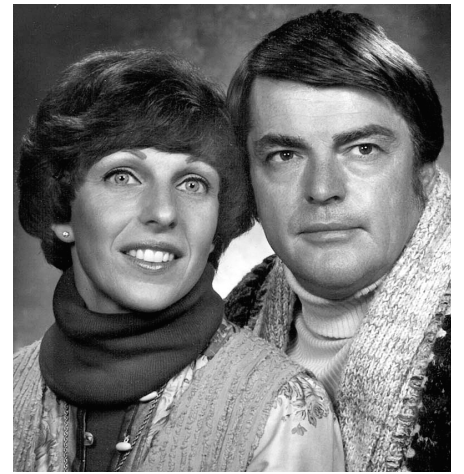
was behind the wheel, I am completely confident that anything about the day the sound barrier fell on that desolate stretch of the Black Rock Desert in Nevada, is as good as technology can recreate it. How fast these past seven years have flown by.

I still marvel at how the guy never shut-up while driving. When the car was moving, Green was always talking, calm and cool as if he were a commercial airplane pilot giving you his cockpit spiel - his voice never wavered, even when he lost both parachutes at 714MPH! Got to be the fighter pilot training in him.

Also in the 'Spirit of Speed' gallery is Richard Nobles' jet ride Thrust 2 which set the World Land Speed Record at 633MPH in 1984, which has its own mighty sound and sights display. Thrust 2 and team had tried to set the record on Bonneville, but constant rain hampered runs and then the salt surface was found to be too slick for the car's solid aluminum alloy wheels causing to handle about as good as your car would on solid ice. Naturally, Noble believes "it is the best display of a land speed record car anywhere in the world." He is mostly right. If he meant permanent display, I'd agree. However, the four-month SPEED exhibit that recently closed at the Petersen Auto Museum in Los Angeles put the Coventry exhibit in second place from a "Wow! Factor" perspective as it was far more detailed and included nearly 20 LSR cars, bikes and trucks.

The Coventry Transport Museum re-launched itself following a massive multi-million dollar refurbishment. If you find yourself visiting across the pond, put this place on your trip list where you'll find the largest collection of British road transport in the world. Coventry was the birthplace of Britain's cycle and car industries and the museum extensive and highly interactive displays are designed to appeal to visitors of all ages and interests.

The three other new galleries include: Introductory Gallery explains the area's heritage and sheer size and scale of the Museum's collection and a 'walk through time' gallery; Futures Gallery interactively explores road safety, the environment and the high tech developments of the future



Trudy and Mickey Thompson as the world will forever remember them . . . before they were gunned down by vile cowards in front of their home early one Spring morning in 1988.

where visitors can design their own futuristic transport and think about how their decisions will shape everyone's future; Temporary gallery with regular high profile exhibitions.

Mickey Thompson Murder Trial Update

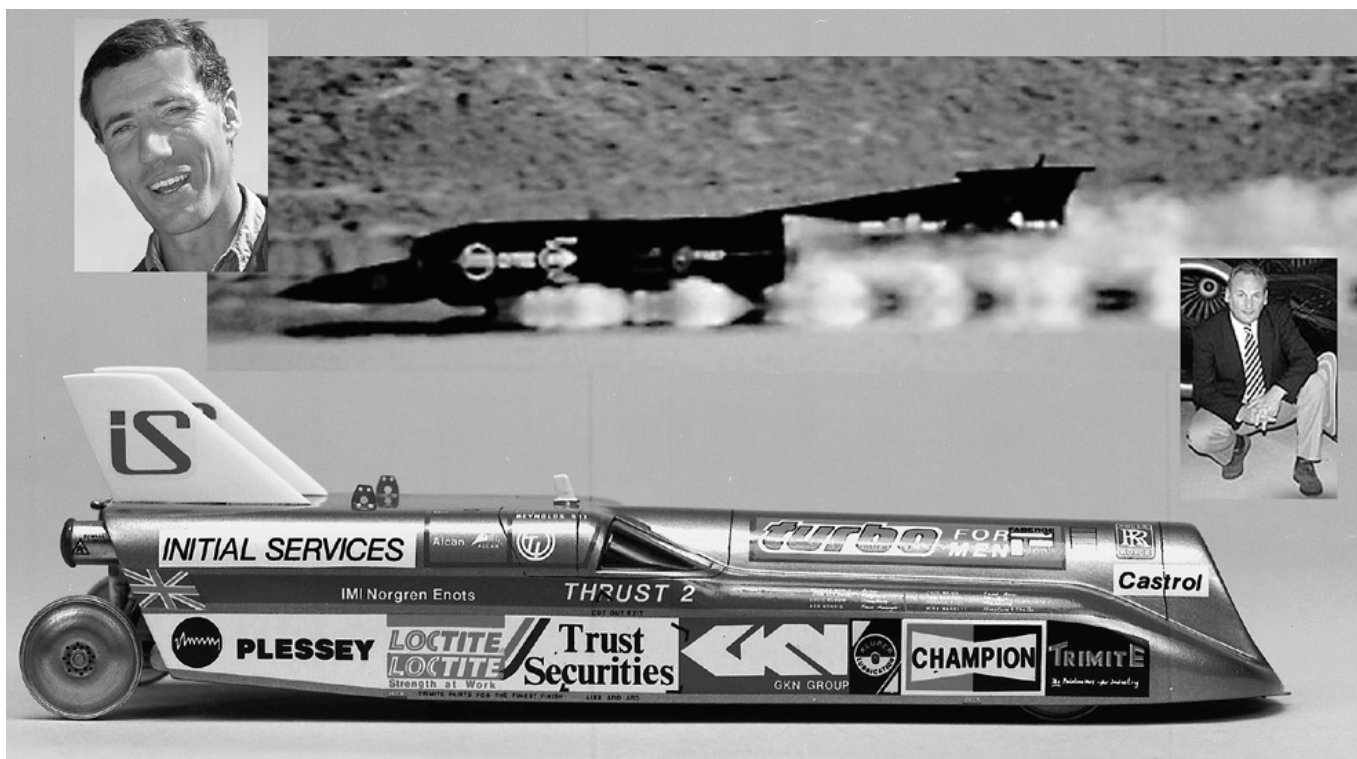
Just when he thought his days in the "Garybar Hotel" were over, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office decided case No. GA 052683 had Michael Frank Goodwin's name on it. The former business partner of Mickey Thompson was charged with the murders of the auto racing icon and his wife, Trudy, in front of their Bradbury home in March 1988.

Goodwin, 59, was about to be set free when the California District Court of Appeal dismissed the Orange County case on jurisdictional grounds on April 23, 2004, but threw the LA prosecutor's a legal crumb stating that any new evidence not previously considered by the Los Angeles District Attorney "can - and should - be given to the Los Angeles District Attorney for reconsideration...". It took until June 8th for the LA District Attorney's office to get the paperwork sorted out and Goodwin could still face the death penalty.

Most in the racing community know that Thompson, 59, and his 41-year-old wife were gunned down outside their home in the hillside San Gabriel Valley community as they were leaving for work early on March 16, 1988. Two men on bicycles were seen fleeing the area and as yet have not been identified. Goodwin, whose business relationship with Thompson went sour and dissolved into legal action, was a suspect.

About five years ago, new witnesses led to Goodwin being jailed for the killings. Now, LA head Deputy District Attorney Patrick Dixon of the Major Crimes Division and Deputy District Attorney Alan Jackson will prosecute the case.

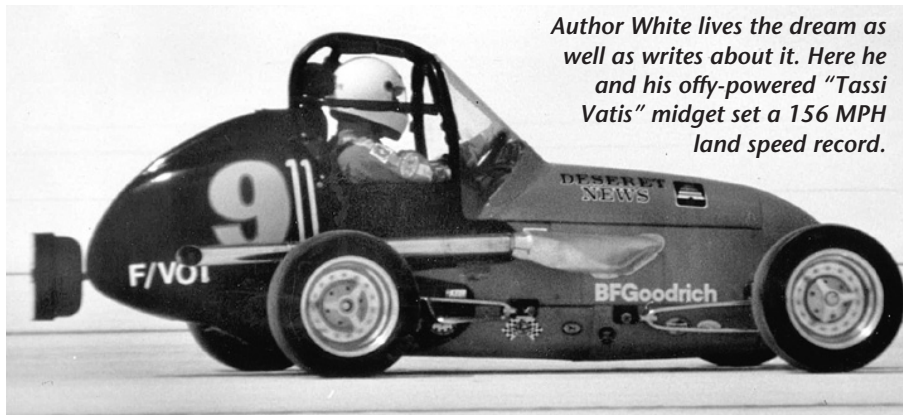
"This development is a mixed bag, explained son Danny Thompson, "It's a good thing because Goodwin won't get out, but it's a bad thing because the process has to start all over again. It just pulls the scab off each time the process is delayed, there is no closure because it won't bring my



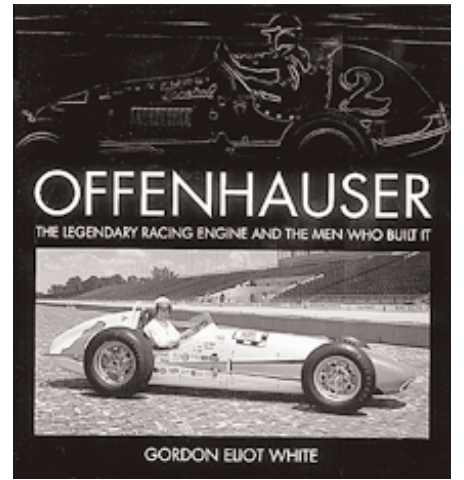
Top: Andy Green, the World's Fastest Man with ThrustSSC inching over 700mph at the Black Rock Desert in Nevada in 1997. Bottom: Thrust 2, the 633mph ride of Richard Noble that set the WLSR in 1984 at Black Rock.



In his younger, wonder days, Mickey Thompson and crew were all smiles on the salt. The car exceeded 400MPH, only the second one in history to do so (Britain's John Cobb was first) and the first American. Unfortunately, on the 406MPH run the drive-shaft broke dashing Thompson's hopes for a world record as repairs could not be made within the slim 60 minute turn-around window.



Author White lives the dream as well as writes about it. Here he and his offy-powered "Tassi Vatis" midget set a 156 MPH land speed record.



### SPEED READING

*Offenhauser*  
The Legendary Racing Engine And The Men Who Built It

By Gordon Eliot White  
200 pages/200 black & white and 25 color photographs  
Softbound \$24.95  
MBI Publishing Company  
www.motorbooks.com  
ISBN: 0760319189

There is one thing I can tell you about author G. E. White. . . , he loves his subject matter and it follows that if you love something, you are more apt to be very careful about what you do with it. White fell under the Offy spell at the tender age of 12, so you can imagine the tremendous amount of research this fellow has been able to accumulate to pen his tome about the "the old growler."

White's original hardcover received much acclaim and won the 1996 Thomas McKean Memorial award given by the Antique Automobile Club of America. Don't let the small number of color photos prevent you from adding the book to your collection; much of the pictorial history occurred before color film was around! The black and white's are all crisp, sharp and full of detail. Factor in the abundance of technical specifications, cross-section, and line drawings and you get a fabulous story of the engine that dominated American Championship, sprint and midget and sports car racing for nearly a half-century. The names alone give you a hint that White has covered the bases: Miller, Goossen, Sobraske, Meyer, Drake and of course, Offenhauser. In short, if someone were teaching a class about Offy's this ought to be the course textbook!

In the late 80's at the Bonneville Salt Flats, the author drove his Tassi Vatis Offy scampered one-way to 159.775MPH before setting a two-way record average 156.902. The wind-up key mounted on the tail section is a smile getter every time and now the cars earned world's fastest Midget bragging rights.

dad back."

Recently joining his dad in the coveted 200MPH Club, Thompson, now a resident of Colorado where he moved to raise his family in peace and quiet added, "Now I can think about my dad without thinking about the murder, some of those special "dad messages" he gave me are just starting to become clear. I'll be working in the shop and then something happens that I didn't expect and I'll think to myself, "Oh, that's what he was trying to tell me."

At the Bonneville Salt Flats in 1960, he drove his four-engine streamliner, CHALLENGER, to a speed of 406.6 mph, becoming the first American to break the 400 mph speed barrier. Thompson built the vehicle that relied on four Pontiac car engines in his small, home garage and achieved this speed mark long before Craig Breedlove showed up at the salt with his jet-powered three-wheeler.

Danny recently restored and donated the 1962 Buick powered Indy car that Dan Gurney drove in his first Indy 500 race. As a gesture of thanks, the race officials invited him to the famed oval speedway to drive 5 spirited laps reaching speeds near 100MPH. "My dad and I had a long conversation on that first lap," he said quietly. Some folks might not remember it was Danny who was first on the scene that horrifying spring morning. 🐞

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