



Fuel For Thought

Landspeed Louise

Tribute: Unrealized Alex Tremulis For Ab Jenkins

Were you to combine all the great names and speed machines that have set records out on the Bonneville Salt Flats they would pale in comparison to the superhuman achievement and sense of leadership demonstrated by only one man: Ab Jenkins, the single most admired land speed racer of all time.

A half century after his death 15 of his world records remain unbroken, including a mind-blowing 48-hour stint,

positions at Cord, Duesenberg, Ford Motor Company, General Motors and Tucker Car Corporation. Born in 1914, he died in 1991, leaving a treasure trove of his prolific writings to nephew William "Steve" Tremulis of Redwood City, CA, who assumed curatorial duties of the collection and is compiling an autobiography of his famous uncle's work.

Long from finished, Steve graciously offered to share the chapter below, believing it was the "right time and the right thing to do" with the release of the Boys of Bonneville documentary honoring Ab and Marv Jenkins.

The first part was written in 1963 and details a project Tremulis sold to Goodyear, and then the next part, written in 1972, explains why the project was not completed. The writings and drawings are all by Tremulis himself and it is thought it is the first time they have even been seen outside of Goodyear executive office walls or the Tremulis Studio in Ventura, California. What you read is exactly as Alex wrote it down, save a few

minor punctuation corrections and is still a fine example of how to cultivate sponsorship. My added notes are represented as (LSL Note: . . .).

Buckle up, firing retros . . . Spirit of Ab Jenkins (LSL NOTE: written 1963, prior to the Gyronaut).

This proposed vehicle is designed to honor the greatest of all long distance drivers whose records have somehow stood the test of time for over 20 years. It was Ab Jenkins' dream to cover 200 miles in one hour on the great 10-mile circle at Bonneville. He fell short of this aim with the Curtis Conqueror Mormon Meteor, but did cover 191 miles in one hour and currently holds all the long distance records from one hour to forty-eight hours. The proposed new record automobile based on lessons learned from the original Mormon Meteor would be

designed on the long wheelbase philosophy with a vertical airfoil cantilevered off the center of the fuselage expressly designed for nullifying the centrifugal force loads imposed on all vehicles traveling on circular courses. At 200 MPH tire-killing centrifugal force loads of 668 lbs would be reduced to approximately 193 lbs thereby constituting straight-line performance characteristics. As a comparison the 4500 lb Mormon Meteor had to cope with some 1505 lbs centrifugal force loadings at a theoretical 200 MPH speed.

In addition to the one-hour record, which would be run with standard high speed "off the shelf" Goodyear Blue Streaks a switch would be made to a set of Goodyear Indianapolis racing tires. It is estimated that these tires running under ideal salt cooling conditions could easily survive an additional 1000 miles for 5 hours at lap speeds of 200 MPH. After some six hours at 200 MPH, in which 1200 miles have been covered, speeds would then be reduced to a lap speed of 160 MPH on the third set of Indianapolis type tires for the remaining 18 hours. On the basis that your tires have a theoretical life of 10,000 miles under minimum side thrust conditions at 150 MPH at Indianapolis this would not be too unrealistic to expect on the Salt Flats.

A breakdown of the three phases of the 24-hour run would be as follows:

1 Hour Goodyear Blue Streaks 200 miles

5 Hours Indianapolis Tires 1000 miles

18 Hours Indianapolis Tires 2880 miles

Total: 4080 miles

A very dramatic 4080 miles will be covered in a 24-hour day, which will constitute a tremendous endorsement for tire dependability with a mileage covered greater than a transcontinental run from New York to Los Angeles in 24 hours.

The run would be terminated at the end of 24 hours. This machine has the potential of also shattering the 36 and

48-hour records still held by Ab Jenkins. However the advertising merit and emotional impact in allowing Ab Jenkins to be immortalized in the record books would have a tremendous sentimental effect on the racing fraternity throughout the world.

In spite of the fact that the legendary Ab Jenkins made these endurance runs on competitive Firestone tires many years ago, Goodyear, in honoring this great driver's accomplishments, would constitute an act of sportsmanship that would be applauded the world over. In the event that a competitive tire manufacture should ever assault these records then naturally the Goodyear Spirit of Ab Jenkins would be recalled for future record runs.

This is a multipurpose test vehicle:

1. It is a record long distance Bonneville 10 mile circle vehicle.
2. It is a 200 MPH tire test bed on the 5 mile circle tire testing provingground.
3. Because of its built-in aerodynamic side thrust airfoil it is the only vehicle in existence that has a built-in capability for the first 200 MPH lap at the Daytona Speedway.

This vehicle will be powered by a Fairlane Cobra 400 HP Weber aspirated power plant furnished me by Mr. Don Frey, Vice President of the Ford Division. I have chosen this engine because its lightweight will guarantee maximum effort performance tire reliability.

The vehicle will be built by the Logghe Stamping Company in Fraser, Michigan under my supervision and because of its unique role as a tire test vehicle will become the property of the Goodyear Tire Company after its 24-hour record attempt where it will continue to be of use as a test vehicle. I will guarantee delivery of this vehicle for a sum of \$30,000 in 100 days after an order has been placed.

A photographic running story of its construction with renderings and expressed design philosophy with outstanding magazine coverage with intent of maximum publicity for the Goodyear Tire Company will be assured.

(LSL Note: Written in 1972, post Gyronaut) For years I had always thought back to that anguished day in Chicago when Ab expressed his frustration at having come so close to the 200 miles in 1 hour. I decided to build and design a

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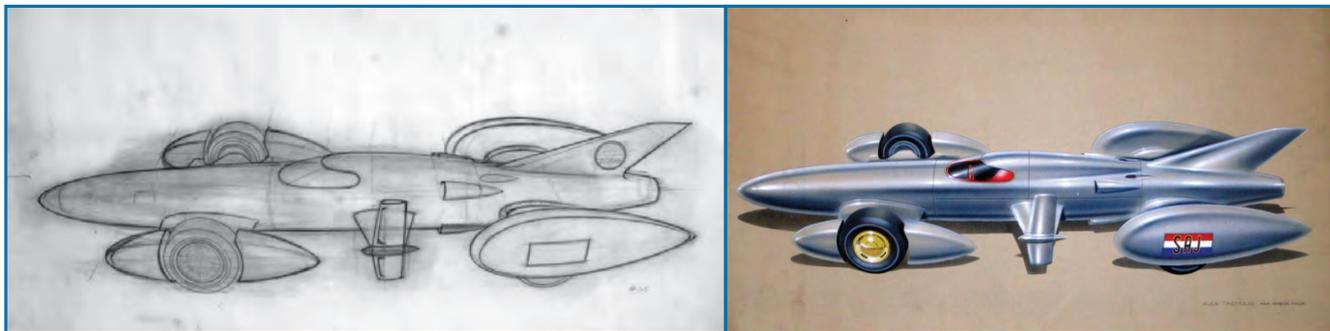


and is a touchstone for the Pontiac Performance legacy when he and son Marvin broke every American closed course record there was in June of 1956, prompting GM to name its fast, new fuel-injected convertible "Bonneville" in 1957.

Jenkins pursuit of speed records was firmly fastened to the highest ethical standards. His handshake was his bond and his self-supported PR campaign brought the "big names" to the salt and put Bonneville on the world motorsport map.

These points were not lost on Alexander Sarantos Tremulis who was best known for designing the fabulous Gyronaut X-1 that set the World Land Speed Record for motorcycles at 245.667 on August 26, 1966 with Bob Leppan twisting the grips.

Tremulis held automotive design



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10-mile circle car to attack the 24-hour record. Ab's Mormon Meteor, because of its massive weight, was generating over 1000 lbs side thrust on the 12-mile circle at a theoretical 200 MPH, mute testimony to the great man's capabilities of literally driving on ice at those speeds.

The Spirit of Ab Jenkins (S.A.J.), was to generate only 650 lbs thrust on a

10-mile circle. I was to nullify this to zero centrifugal force by cantilevering a vertical airfoil section that would operate at a 10 to 12-degree of incidence and would place it at the center of aerodynamic pressure area. In essence, the car would be neutral in steering, and would be tied to an invisible string fastened to the center of the circle.

Goodyear engineers estimated that tire life would be increased some 300% at these speeds. The wheelbase was to be 142.5 inches as Ab had preferred. He was never really impressed with the short 125-inch chassis for Bonneville speeds. The only concession to pure streamlining was the open toe of the tires, which Ab had always insisted that the driver must see. We were to carry 70 gals of fuel in the nose for a 250-mile range and were to make all our pit stops using a parachute in order to keep our tire life at maximum.

Power was to be a 450 HP Cobra mildly aspirated by a single Granatelli

Paxton 6 lb boost supercharger to keep the engine from catching emphysema at Bonneville's 4200' altitude. I was to make the first preliminary runs and trim the wing for optimum performance. If I deemed the car safe enough and demonstrated my capability at speed I was to drive the first hour and cover the first 200 miles in one hour. I felt that this was more than appropriate as I was doing this in Ab's memory and that he would want me to do it.

After the first hour I would turn the car over to Craig Breedlove and Bobby Tatroe with orders to run for four hours and to be the first men in history to cover 1000 miles in less than 5 hours. We would then slow to an average speed of 160 MPH for the remaining 19 hours. At the end of 24 hours we were to cover 4040 miles, the equivalent of eight Indy 500 mile races, and get this, on-one set of Goodyear Indianapolis racing tires.

All agreed this was going to sell a lot of tires. I was also to drive the last hour and in the finest Ab Jenkins tradition was to shave my beard and come in cleanly shaven. This one act alone I felt sure was worth at least \$2500 in sponsorship money from a leading electric shaver company. Goodyear was tremendously enthused. They also wanted to use the car at the Daytona Speedway with one of their top team drivers and record the first 200 MPH lap. I really had Goodyear over a barrel as they knew that Art Arfons who traveled on Firestone would open all the doors for me and everyone really knew that Ab Jenkins and Firestone

were synonymous.

However Goodyear has been very kind to me. They developed the land speed record tires for my Gyronaut, sponsored a great deal of time for us at Bonneville and have given me much peace of mind when my driver (rider), Bob Leppan, who on more than 40 occasions has traveled at speeds of more than 200 MPH without the slightest semblance of any tire problems.

When Goodyear asked about the 36 and 48-hour records I said "no". The 36 and 48-hour records are to be forever memorialized in the record books by Ab Jenkins. He made them single-handedly and where on earth could we ever find such a man. However if a competitive company had the audacity to attack the 36 and 48-hour record, let's say on Flintstone Rubber, then naturally I would bring the Goodyear S. A. J. out of retirement to take them back.

Then it happened. Just as we were all ready to sign on the dotted line I got sidetracked. I received an offer to come out to California to do a gyro car concept that unfortunately failed to materialize and I left Goodyear high and dry. Reflecting back I wish I had built the car now. Goodyear felt it would have done the job. I knew it would have done it. Ab Jenkins would have been happy.

LSL NOTE: The 48-hour record was not a solo event, Ab had a relief driver, Elbert "Babe" Stapp, a well-known Indy shoe).

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. After 11 years in print less than 20 of the 49 copies remain of the author's special autographed edition. For more details and to order, go to: www.landspeedproductions.biz. 

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-speeds & Fist-fights tell tales of car craziness like "rat-racing" on gravel roads, illegal drags on state highways, high school fist-fights and racing with trains. *Recollections Regrets & Random Acts* tells the youthful stories of 11 well known men in the hot rod world. The latest: *Accidents & Incidents*, is rod running stories. To order each or a package deal on all four, visit www.RAJetter.com. 

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things are "cool" and going well, then when we find ourselves facing an emergency, we expect Him to be on hand, and immediately ready to hear and answer our cry of distress. And He is, as long as we're doing our part with our life.

It may be a little difficult to imagine God as being like a bird, however in

Psalm 91:4 David described himself as sitting in the shadow, or protection, of God's wings. Likewise, in another passage we are offered the assurance that the Lord would "cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge." The wings of a bird were a symbol of protection, defense, and refuge, therefore showing the care we are under as God's kids. When we look outside and observe birds darting about to protect their nestlings from cats, squirrels, and other predators, we see a basic picture of the way God intervenes to defend and provide shelter. It pays to pay attention before a breakdown rather than trying to see how far we can go after hearing noises and sounds we should be paying attention to whether it relates to our street rod, or personal issues. As for me, I made a fresh commitment that from now on I wasn't going to wait until things got 'Hot! Hot! Hot!' before paying attention to the little things that can quickly become big things! The wise man Solomon's words in Proverbs 4:2 continue to hold true for all. "Sons, listen...and pay attention in order to gain understanding. After all, I have taught you well."

Are you interested in either sending your son/grandson, age 16 - 19 to a CRA Hot Rod Camp in '12? Perhaps you would consider sponsoring a young guy? Call or write CRA for more info: CRA, PO Box 2029, Branson West, MO 65737; 417-338-8537; cra@integrity.com. 

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truck was on his bucket list and he began gathering parts as early as 1978. "As rare as these are, I bought parts whenever I ran across them," he says. Construction began in 2007 after his retirement, and concluded the Wednesday before the Goodguys Nationals in Columbus.

Barry says the funnest part of the build was the thrill of the hunt for the parts and the people that he met along the way. In the end everything on the truck would be new, including the rare tailgate, the rear quarters from AMS Obsolete in Georgia, and a cherry hood from Arizona.

The original engine choice was a built 340, but as time progressed, the new 5.7L Hemis came out and could be purchased for the same money. Barry worked with RMS Chassis to have one of their Alter-K-tion K-frames fitted with the correct mounts to use the new engine. The matching 5-speed automatic required a new transmission tunnel, and all of the floor pans were replaced while the saws were out.

Barry had picked up a 1973 Duster for parts, and used the car's 8 1/4 rearend after stuffing it with 3.55 gears and a Sure Grip. The suspension was also updated with 11" Wilwood disc brakes and QA1 coilovers.

While the Duster was being parted, Barry noticed that the dash had almost

the same curvature as the Valiant's. The truck's stock dash was "unsightly" in Barry's eyes, and too shallow for A/C. So he narrowed the Duster dash by 3.5" and filled the gauge opening. He added a Dakota Digital strip gauge assembly along the lower edge, and added a matching trim element to the other side with machined Valiant and 5.7 logos. The pod below houses the trick push button ignition and wiper switch. A Flaming River tilt column and Waterfall steering wheel are trimmed in the same color as the rest of the interior, stitched by King's Upholstery in Roanoke, VA.

Modifications to the body were limited to filling the cowl panel and seams before the flawless candy apple red paint went down, and Barry selected a round of 17 and 18" Coy's five spokes on BFG's to finish the car off.

While Barry maintains that he had an absolute blast in chasing down parts during the build, the finished product has also brought him a lot of joy, and even introduced him to other Panel Truck owners. As of yet, nobody can identify the company who performed the conversion for Plymouth, and if you can, it would be nice if you dropped Barry a line at BLCS57@cox.net so he can share the information with others. With only 50 of these hard working utility vehicles built in 1962, the owner's group is a very small circle. Barry was overjoyed to meet another owner in Columbus.

As far as his love of chasing down parts, he'll be just fine; he's picked up a 1955 Plymouth two-door wagon with 27,000 original miles that he has on the burners. 

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ing out a pro-street chassis with a chrome plated Currie rearend. The frame was made at Doug's shop and brought back to Kenneth's two-car garage in Florida. The body was flipped onto a pile of mattresses purchased from goodwill with the help of eight friends and the restored floors were trimmed out with a plasma cutter to clear the new handmade wheel tubs. The body was then reinforced to handle the proposed massive horsepower load, the gas door was shaved, and the head and taillights were molded for a smooth look.

They made a rotisserie and mounted the body for transport. The original parts not used were put on the market and went all over the country. Kenneth says, "Many buyers were astounded that I was hot rodding my beautifully restored car, but were happy to buy the parts. I probably helped 15 other T-birds get back on the road after all was said and done."

The radical power plant was to be a 429 stroked to 514ci, but changed with conversations amongst drag racers Ben Worthy, Connie and the late Scott Kalitta, and Kurt Neighbor. In the end a cast iron 427ci S.O.H.C. block, heads, and valve covers were located and purchased. It would take Kenneth four years to build