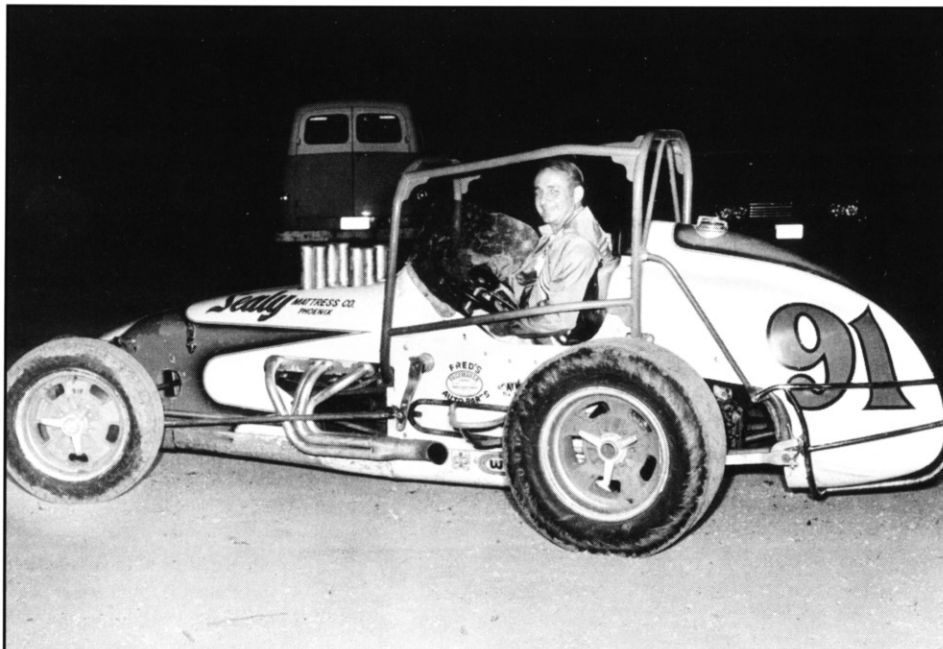


NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

ALBERT "BUDDY" TAYLOR



Albert "Buddy" Taylor

Leroy Byers Photo

Albert Layne "Buddy" Taylor was born on March 25, 1926, in Clovis, New Mexico, to parents Bertie Belle and Curtis Taylor. He was an only child and was born in Clovis only because Muleshoe, Tex., didn't have a hospital.

Buddy began racing at the Rio Grande Sports Bowl, a quarter-mile dirt oval, in 1947. He soon found himself competing regularly at the Cormit Speedway, a high banked quarter-mile, and then Speedway Park, a 3/8-mile dirt track. All three speedways operated in the Albuquerque area in the late Forties and early Fifties.

Taylor married Rexene in 1947, after meeting her at Rio Grande. They would have four children together, Beverly, Duane, Janice, and Judy.

Buddy grew up driving midget cars like the Roy Rogers "half-pint" midget in 1948. Throughout his career, he never stopped dri-

ving them, even though he had moved into modified, super-modifieds and sprint cars. In fact, late in his career, he credited the midget racing with rejuvenating his sprint car racing efforts. In the late Forties and early Fifties, Buddy raced a lot with midget car owner Al Forbes. It is said that Bobby Unser's daddy, Jerry Unser, Sr., threatened to sue his good friends Forbes and Taylor over them letting young Bobby drive that midget without Jerry's approval. Years later, Indianapolis 500 winner Bobby Unser would proudly proclaim that Buddy Taylor was "quite capable of being the third man from Albuquerque to win at Indy. I'd put his talent on a parallel with ours."

Taylor switched to racing jalopies in 1949, and was a charter member of the New Mexico Modified Racing Association (NMMRA) when it was formed in 1951.

Buddy claimed several midget driving titles over the years, including the 1953 and '54 Arizona Midget Owners & Driver Club championship. That was the same title that Bobby Ball won in 1949-50. Taylor also finished seventh in the American Automobile Association (AAA) stock car point standings in 1954.

During the late Fifties, Sixties, and into the Seventies, Taylor dominated the Southwest region of supermodified racing. He had accumulated eleven New Mexico State Championships (1958-65, 1968-70) including eight consecutive titles, and two Arizona State Championships (1973, '78). Buddy's son Duane captured the same New Mexico State Championship in 1972 and '76.

Buddy loved kids, and many of the trophies that he won during that time were given away to them. He also helped at-risk high school kids in his automotive shop in the 5 points area of Albuquerque by teaching them mechanical and welding skills.

Buddy also loved racing at Keith Hall's Manzanita Speedway in Phoenix, and it was there that he almost won the Western States Sprint Car Championships in 1971 and '72. In '71, Jan Opperman took the win over Taylor, 1969 winner Bob Huebner, "Tiger Gene" Brown and Marty Kinerk. In '72, it was "Opp" again over Taylor, Kenny Weld, Billy Shuman and Darrell Dockery. He also finished eighth in '69, and sixth in '77 at the renamed Western World.

ALBERT "BUDDY" TAYLOR, *CONTINUED*

As many racers did in the Seventies, Taylor competed in sprint car racing's "Triple Crown". At the Knoxville Sprint Car National Championship in Iowa, Taylor's best finish was tenth in 1970. His best finish at the Pacific Coast Sprint Car Championships at Ascot Park in Gardena, Calif., was in 1973 when he finished 26th.

Buddy Taylor's lone career United States Auto Club (USAC) national midget car feature win came at Roger Mauro's Erie, Colo., dirt track in August of 1976. Taylor was driver of the Vern Shaver-owned midget and he defeated Dave Strickland and Mel Kenyon.

Tragically, Albert "Buddy" Taylor was killed on September 23,

1978 at Manzanita while he was charging to the front in the third heat. The "Albuquerque Wild Child" got caught up in a tangle and flipped violently; he died enroute to the hospital. He had already clinched the title that year at the track where he had accrued 36 career feature wins.

Buddy's career spanned 31 years, during which time he won more than 200 features and at least a dozen track championships across the Southwest (New Mexico/Arizona). Albuquerque ace mechanics Cecil Tranthem and Walter Judge wrenched on many of Buddy's winning machines over those years.

Even though Buddy was 52 years old when he lost his life, racing open-wheel cars was an energizing experience for him, not a tiring one. He was passionate about the sport, so it was not atypical that on his final weekend, Albert "Buddy" Taylor raced two divisions of cars on both Friday and Saturday nights at two different tracks in two different states.