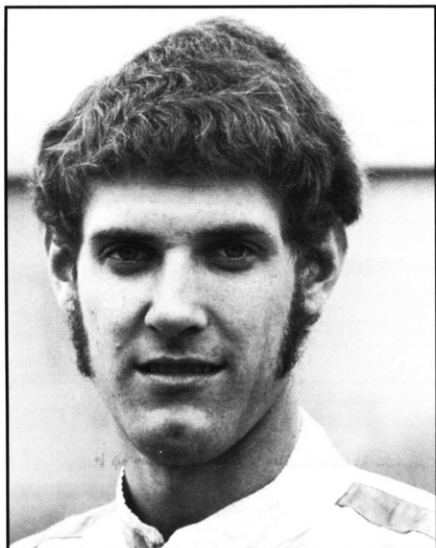


JIMMY OSKIE



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John Mahoney

Jimmy Oskie was born February 8, 1946, in Maywood, California, to Emma and A.L. Oskie. Jimmy's father owned the long-held family business, Oskie Auto Glass, in South Los Angeles. Jimmy had one sister, Mary.

A.L. Oskie owned jalopies that raced at Gardena Stadium and sportsman modifieds that ran at the Balboa Stadium in San Diego. Bob Hogle has one of the elder Oskie's regular drivers. Jimmy Oskie started his driving career with the jalopies at the age of sixteen, although, according to Jimmy, "I told them I was eighteen. 'My dad owned and sponsored cars and he made me go to the races to keep me off the streets. I really preferred baseball because it came easy to me. I knew all of the signs, how to adjust my hat and how to back out of the batter's box. By the time I figured out how I got into racing, it was too late. I only raced jalopies for about three months, just long enough to learn what it was all about.'"

Oskie graduated to driving a modified owned by his father and it was in this car that he drove his first sprint car race during a brief period in 1963 when the California Racing Association (CRA) allowed cars with roll cages to run. He competed at J.C. Agajanian's Ascot Park and the Cajon Speedway in El Cajon. In 1964, Jimmy was a rookie with CRA and finished ninth in points.

In what was to be a habit throughout most of his career, Jimmy spent 1965 car-hopping from one ride to another on the CRA circuit. The Oskies then decided to have Granvel "Hank" Henry, another San Diego Racing Association veteran, build a 4-bar-style sprint car for young Jimmy. Said Jimmy, "Hank always wanted to build a 4-bar car, but he didn't like to be rushed. I told him that I was going into the Navy for two years and he could take his time."

Periodically over the next two years, Oskie's mother visited Henry's shop, checking on his progress and secretly slipping him five hundred dollars at a time. Jimmy later said, "Mom always thought she was being watched."

The car, the J-Ram Chevy number 91, was finished in 1968, just in time for Oskie's discharge. According to Oskie, "The car was ahead of its time. The torsion bar points and the frame layout is the same as they are using today."

Oskie, who credits two-time CRA champion Bob Hogle with teaching him many of the basics of rac-

ing, was named the sanctioning body's 1968 Most Improved Driver award recipient, after he claimed victories at Ascot Park (three) and Whiteman Stadium in Pacoima. He also finished second in points to Hogle that year, and ahead of 1967 champion Billy Wilkerson, Ned Spath and Dick Fries.

Sadly, Oskie's friend Hank Henry had lost his life at Ascot in April of that year. Tad Kitiano, who had helped Henry, moved over to help Oskie through the years. In fact, Tad usually helped Oskie's nervous car owners, as it was Tad who had the task of rounding-up the laid-back driver, out wandering the pits, before every race.

In 1969, Jimmy Oskie won his first CRA point championship following victories at El Centro, Ascot (four) and Clovis in his J-Ram Chevy. Oskie bested Wilkerson, Fries, Don Hamilton, Colby Scroggin and Hogle for the prestigious title. Jimmy is proud of the fact that his title-winning car was the last non-caged car to win a race, and to win a point championship, in CRA.

The next year, Oskie won at El Cajon with the Talley Chevy and then he ventured to the midwest to run with the United States Auto Club (USAC). Jimmy ran with USAC in the midwest for two years in the early 1970's because, as he said, "It was the thing to do in those days. I really didn't know what I wanted to do back then so I figured the only way to find out was to try."

In 1971, he made eleven starts with USAC, with a fourth behind winner Larry "Boom Boom" Cannon, Sammy Sessions and Billy Thrasher at Cincinnati being his best finish, aboard Don Peabody's Don Edmunds-built car. However, he soon tired of the travel and returned to his home in Maywood, California. According to Jimmy, "I decided that I'd rather stay home and eat steaks than travel and eat hamburgers. Besides, I missed the California girls."

After his return to CRA, Oskie again drove successfully for a variety of car owners. Jimmy said, "I would always bring my own car along and leave it on the trailer, just in case."

Jimmy won in 1972 at Ascot in his own Oskie number 91 car, and he finished second to champion Stan McElrath in CRA points.

One year later, Oskie was again runner-up in points, this time to champion Don Hamilton. Rounding out the top five CRA drivers in 1973 were Clark Templeman, Rick Goudy and Spath, respectively. Oskie also collected a pair of wins that year, for himself and Robertson.

In 1974, he clinched his second CRA point title after garnering wins at Ascot and Santa Maria. Rounding out the top five in points were

Templeman, Dean Thompson, Walt Kennedy and Goudy. That year and the next, Oskie ran pretty much week-to-week for owner Don Blair, although he always had his own back-up car in the parking lot.

He won with Blair in 1975 at Ascot and finished seventh in points. That year Bobby Olivero won the CRA championship over Goudy and Bob East, and Jimmy took his first flip in twelve years.

Jimmy then began his long and very successful association with Jack and Wilda Kindoll, and their JFK-sponsored sprinter, in 1976. Oskie won at Ascot every year from 1976 through 1981 with the Kindolls. He also claimed his third point title in 1976, his fourth in '77, and his fifth in '79, all aboard the JFK sprinter. In 1978, he finished third in points behind champion Goudy and runner-up Dean Thompson.

His success during that partnership, until it dissolved in 1982 due to Jack's ill health, also included wins at Chula Vista in 1978 and '81, and at Ascot in '79 in the Don Peabody Classic. In addition, Oskie drove for Walter Knepper on the Indy Mile in 1978, finishing fifth in a USAC event behind winner Lealand McSpadden, Rich Vogler, Billy Engelhart and Mark Alderson.

Dean Thompson won the CRA point championship in 1980 and '81, but Oskie was third both years. He slipped to seventh in points in 1982, and his last career CRA win came at Ascot in 1983 aboard Hank Higuchi's car.

Jimmy Oskie retired from CRA competition in 1990 with 29 fast time awards, 56 trophy dash wins, and 58 main event victories. And, in the 1990 CRA Yearbook, which had compiled those statistics for 1960 through '90, Oskie led all dash competitors with his 56 victories, followed by "Deano" at 53, Billy Wilkerson at 41, Brad Noffsinger at 40, and Bob Hogle at 38. In the main event win category during that period, Oskie and his 58 wins was ranked fourth behind Thompson with 103, Norman "Bubby" Jones with 79, and Hogle with 63. Ron Shuman with 57, Lealand McSpadden with 49, and Noffsinger with 45 checkered flags followed Oskie.

The current Downey resident is a devotee of Rod Serling's "Twilight Zone" television show; in fact, he has them all on videotape. Says Jimmy, "The only problem is that I know where the commercials are and since they're removed, every time I get up to get something to eat, the show comes back on."

He also has his number 91 Hank Henry sprinter, nicknamed "Ol' Paint", which he takes to numerous vintage racing exhibitions.



Jimmy Oskie

Ken Coles Photos