

NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

BOB TROSTLE

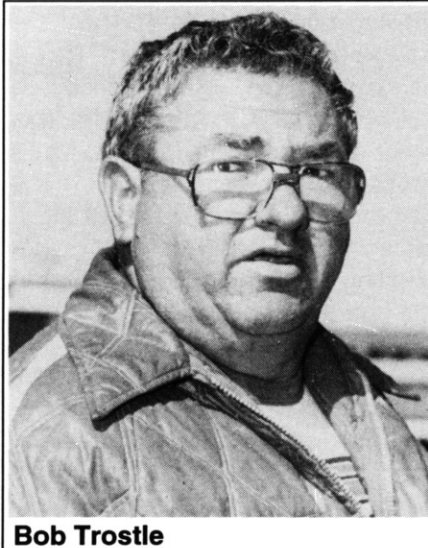
by Larry Weeks

Bob Trostle was born on March 20, 1933, and started his career in circle track racing in 1950 as a mechanic on a jalopy owned by his buddy Chuck Wheeler. Since the boys weren't 21, promoter Marion Robinson would kick them out of the pits if he saw them at the old Kessel Speedway in Des Moines. The 1950s saw Bob turn to drag racing.

In the fall of 1960, he teamed with driver Dick Kettles and bought a Chevy coupe to compete at the Knoxville Raceway the following year. Their success that season was limited, so over the winter Bob built his first racer, the number 96 super-modified which is currently on display in the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame (NSCHoF). Kettles drove the car at the Knoxville season opener in '62, but it was Max "Sonny" Helms who brought Bob his first feature win in August at Webster City (Iowa). Five years later, Trostle gained his first 'A' feature win at Knoxville when Earl Wagner wheeled the Trostle-built, Trostle-wrenched sprinter which was co-owned by Bill Moyer (Sr.) of Des Moines.

If the mid-1960s brought local success to Bob at Knoxville, the late '60s and early 1970s meant region-

al success to him both as a car owner and as a chassis-builder. Trostle, an automotive machinist by profession, made the decisions to make his hobby (building winning sprint cars) his full-time business and to team with friend Dave Van Patten. During that period, Bob and Dave hired such standouts as Ron Perkins, Dick Sutcliffe, Roger Larson, Jan Opperman and Larry Kirkpatrick to pilot their sprinters in the Midwest.



Bob Trostle

It is obvious that Bob Trostle is well respected by many of his peers. Anyone who has ever benefited from Bob's helping hand would agree with Karl Kinser when he said, "I don't know of anyone more deserving (of being in the NSCHoF). We'd all be better off with more Bob Trostle's in sprint car racing." Knoxville's director of rac-

ing Ralph Capitani said this about Bob's technical ability: "He's an innovator who has done a lot that has been widely copied." And Kenny Woodruff had this to say about Bob, "He has the biggest heart you'll ever find; he'll loan you anything, give you anything and stay up all night fixing cars for people."

Doug Wolfgang, who will always be Bob's 'hero', said this about Trostle, "I'd say it (Bob's induction) was because of all the young guys he helped get started and for helping guys whose careers needed some help to keep going. He's shown patience with the young guys and an eye for talent. He wanted me to drive his car before anybody else thought I was ready. We won the third time out. Not many mechanics are better at figuring the right set-up than ol' Bob."

Not surprisingly, Bob has admitted, "I enjoy starting people. Anyone can hire a winner, but hiring someone nobody heard of and making a winner out of him, that's what I like." And according to National Sprint Car Hall of Famer Jan Opperman, "Bob's the one who really got me going in sprint car racing, back in 1968, my first year in the Midwest."

Bob Trostle has won a remarkable 302 unlimited and 40 limited sprint car feature wins in his career to date as an owner. Highlighted

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among those wins are two Knoxville Nationals titles in 1977 with Doug Wolfgang and in 1980 with Steve Kinser (his first of eight Nationals titles to date). Other major wins for Trostle came in 1979 with 'Wolfie' at the Skagit (Wash.) Super Dirt Cup and with Shane Carson at the Busch-sponsored WoO Finale in Rossburg (Ohio). Bob's wins have come in the United States, Canada and Australia. He estimates that he has fielded a car in over 2,500 races, averaging between 80 and 90 events annually.

Besides his two National triumphs, Trostle has won 52 unlimited class features and six track championships at his home track of Knoxville. Winning the track titles for Bob have been Doug Wolfgang (1976 & 1977), Shane Carson (1978), Tim Green (1981 & 1982) and Randy Smith (1988). During the 1977 season, Trostle and Wolfgang won an amazing 45 feature wins nationwide. They also established two Knoxville Raceway records: ten consecutive main event victories, and twelve regular season victories.

Trostle has previously been inducted into the S&K Mechanics Hall of Fame in 1974, the Knoxville

Raceway Hall of Fame in 1979 and the Midwest Racing Hall of Fame earlier in 1993. He was also the recipient of the Taylor "Pappy" Weld Memorial Trophy and the NSCHoF-sponsored Knoxville Raceway Heritage Award in 1990. Today, Bob Trostle remains the only car owner to have competed in all 32 Knoxville Nationals championships (1961-1992).

Bob and his wife Dorothea live in Des Moines, as do their daughters Jeane and Judy. It is only natural that a man who has given so much to sprint car racing has lived less than two blocks from the storied Iowa State Fairgrounds dirt track for all of his life. Bob currently owns and maintains the limited cars of his grandson Mark Wilson and his friend Tony Moro.