



Jimmy Boyd

To call Jimmy Boyd a pioneer or trailblazer would be selling short the impact Boyd had on sprint car and super-modified racing in northern California.

A better description might be game-changer, because that is what Boyd did. Within his regional hotbed, he changed the sport of dirt, short-track, open-wheel racing.

How did it happen? Flashback to the 1973 Gold Cup Race of Champions at West Capital Raceway in West Sacramento, Calif. After spending two seasons racing in Pennsylvania, Boyd returned to his home state in pursuit of the biggest purse of the year. With a Charlie Lloyd chassis that was unlike anything anyone had ever seen in California, Boyd created a buzz before that term existed. "That car hooked up so hard!" recalled Boyd.

In Gold Cup time trials, the Dixon, Calif., resident established a new single-lap track record that literally had timing and scoring officials wondering if the clock had malfunctioned. Boyd turned a 12.631 - taking nearly one full second off of the previous track record.

When the 100-lap feature event rolled to a start, Boyd quickly jumped into the lead and never looked back. By lap 95, he had lapped the field. He led all 100 laps in dominant fashion and earned a record \$2,200 for his victory.

Gary Gerould, veteran motorsports commentator, was the track announcer at the time. "There is no doubt that Boyd took it to a different level," said Gerould. "His car was a step up in class and after that '73 Gold Cup, the elite drivers wanted to be driving sprint cars. Super-modifieds were suddenly second fiddle. It was the start of the sprint car revolution out here."

Jimmy Boyd was born on January 8, 1942, in Oakland, Calif., to parents James and Noele Boyd. Jimmy had one brother John.

The soft-spoken throttle-masher started racing "hardtop stock cars" in 1960, bouncing between Chico, and Anderson, California. According to Boyd, he won "several races" and was the track champion at both tracks. Hardtops evolved into super-modifieds, and Jimmy's first race with the Northern Auto Racing Club (NARC) was in 1967 at the Calistoga Speedway.

By 1972 Boyd was convinced by Dave Norris to try his hand at the "super sprint" circuit in Central Pennsylvania. "I think I went to Pennsylvania with \$250 in my hands," recalled Boyd. That same year, Boyd took Betty Opperman, widow of Jay Opperman, to be his wife.

Looking back, Boyd says his initial runs there were disheartening. "I went back there, driving over my head, on two-wheels, and I still got lapped twice. It was a rude awakening. The car wasn't fast enough and neither was I."

As Boyd returned home to California at the close of the 1972 season, he scored a big win at Eagle Raceway in Nebraska. That \$1,500 score helped restore Boyd's confidence and hope.

Boyd spent the better part of four seasons racing in the Keystone State from 1972 through '75. At the end of the '75 season, Boyd drove Jack Gunn's number 25 sprint car with tremendous success at Williams Grove Speedway, winning four feature events. "Racing in Pennsylvania with fast guys made me faster," said Boyd. "Racers rise and fall to the level of the competition."

With a return west for the 1976 season, Boyd embarked on the era that perhaps cemented his legacy. A teaming with Sacramento mechanic and car owner Kenny Woodruff led to a combination that was hard to defeat.

Behind the wheel, Boyd reminded fans of a soldier. He had perfect posture, sitting straight up in the seat. His head appeared to be on a swivel, and he was never bent at the waist. His reactions were cat-quick.

In 1977, the Woodruff/Boyd team stormed into Iowa on the heels of a huge Skagit Dirt Cup win worth \$2,500. Boyd won back-to-back features at the Southern Iowa Speedway in Oskaloosa and the Knoxville Raceway in a span of 48 hours. Of his first win at Knoxville, Boyd said, "It wasn't as big of a deal then as it is now. It was Knoxville, but I looked to Ascot even more than Knoxville."

Southern California had yet to be conquered by Boyd. That changed in 1977 as well. Boyd and Woodruff quieted the So-Cal faithful with a convincing win at Ascot; setting a new 30-lap track record in the process. The Bob Trostle-chassis number 21 also romped at Santa Maria Speedway under the NARC sanction.

The race Boyd is best known for winning occurred on March 18, 1978. The first points-paying, final-night event in the history of Ted Johnson's World of Outlaws (WoO) fell to Boyd and Woodruff at Lanny Edwards' Devil's Bowl Speedway in Mesquite, Texas. "It was probably the best win of my career," said Boyd.

After back-to-back preliminary wins in the 1978 Dirt Cup at Skagit, the number 21 car headed to the Midwest for the summer. Midwest Speedway and 34 Raceway marked the final wins for the super team of Boyd and Woodruff, who parted ways after the 1978 Knoxville Nationals.

It was hard to imagine Boyd not steering the orange number 21. But any concerns that he might struggle outside that machine were quickly vanquished when Boyd teamed with Vern Kornbrust to begin the 1979 campaign. The duo won "right out

of the box" at West Capital's opener in March. By the end of the season, Boyd and Kornbrust added Golden State victories at Petaluma, Santa Maria, Calistoga, and Dixon. "Racing with Vern was fun," recalled Boyd. "He didn't have the money that other car owners had. We raced on a shoestring, but our Gary Stanton-built car was fast!"

By 1980, Boyd was running for the car owner duo of Jim Brandy and Dick Glaspy. Their car, which featured the number XX, was a staple of northern California. "Dick Glaspy was a good friend. We used to go fishing, as well as racing," said Boyd.

A big 1982 win in Washington at Skagit Speedway's Super Dirt Cup was the XX team's "high-water mark." Not only did Boyd win his preliminary night, he backed it up with a \$5,100 victory on the final night, becoming the first three-time winner of the prestigious Jim Raper-promoted event.

Boyd, like so many from his generation, was a driver that was also handy with tools. He worked alongside his car owners on everything from general maintenance to getting the car setup correctly.

Over the course of his career, "Flyin' Jimmy Boyd" sat in the seat of some very potent machines that were owned by a who's who among car owners (aside from those already mentioned). Bob Hodges, Jerry Pittman, Jimmy DeBeaumont, Bob Davis, Frank Lucas, John Benu, Gary Wasson, Ed Watson, Quentin Bammer, and John Siroonian all allowed Boyd to apply his craft in their machines.

In the twilight of his racing career, Boyd hooked up with Roger Henderson, another famous California car owner that fielded a rapid #7n sprint car. The team concentrated their efforts on the Baylands Raceway Park track championship and achieved their goal, winning five main events in 1983.

After Boyd was dismissed from the Henderson ride, the first and only time in his career that he was fired, he said that he had offers to race again, but something fundamental had changed. "I felt worse when I didn't win than happy when I did win."

Jimmy Boyd, whose feature win list includes the San Jose pavement, took his final feature win on June 30, 1984, at Baylands Raceway Park in Roger Henderson's number 7n sprint car.

Jimmy Boyd presently enjoys life in Woodland, California with his wife Betty. He has six children, Dawn, Debbie, Leah, Jan, Jayme, and Missy.

By Bobby Gerould

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Congratulations Jimmy!
From Your Friends Fred, Charlene & Freddie Maydole