



by Perry Bell

## Ron Shaver

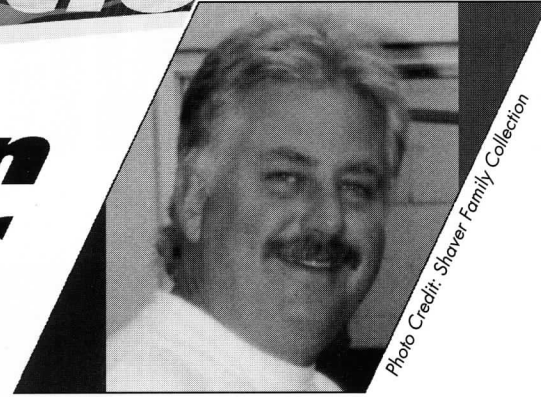


Photo Credit: Shaver Family Collection

Ronald William Shaver was born in Hermosa Beach, California, on August 14, 1948. He was virtually born into the Shaver Specialty Company, which strategically opened in 1936 next to the Offenhauser engine facility. The shop, which specialized in commercial meat- and vegetable-cutting machinery, was started by his grandfather, George Shaver, Sr., and his father, George Shaver, Jr. In the fifties, drag racing engine work came to their machine shop from Drake Engineering.

Ron attended Inglewood High School, and he graduated in 1966, prior to attending El Camino Junior College. In the 1960's and early '70s, Ron was a drag racer. He grew up with Tommy Hunt, son of the founder of Joe Hunt Magnetos. Tom was a sprint car racer. "In 1976, Tom talked me into getting started (building engines) in sprint car racing. We had early success," Ron said.

Along came Bruce Bromme, Jr., and Bruce Bromme, Sr. "They had a young driver, Dean Thompson. Dean was quoted as saying if he had an engine, he could win everything in sight," Ron replied.

"Success with the Bromme's and Dean Thompson starting bringing people to me," Ron explained.

Up next came C.K. Spurlock, Jr., of the Gambler Chassis Company, with mechanic Kenny Woodruff and driver Danny Smith. "Kenny took me under his wing. If it wasn't for Bromme and Woodruff, I wouldn't be where I am at today," Ron said.

Ron started with the Shaver Engine Company in 1976, but it wasn't until '78 when he started to build race motors for sprint cars full-time. "I had one employee with me back in 1978, Eddy Hansen. He worked with me for 27 years. We built ten motors that year," he said.

1978 was the year when Ted Johnson formed the World of Outlaws (WoO). Ron recalls, "Kenny (Woodruff) was a work-a-holic. I remember traveling with Kenny, and we'd get a room around 3:00 in the morning and the next thing you know, he was back up at 5 a.m. ready to go down the road."

Needless to say Kenny Woodruff and Ron Shaver built up a trust for one another. "That trust has paid off over the years," Ron stated.

The quality of work and the associations with people like Woodruff and Bromme have earned many coveted titles for the racers powered by Shaver Engines over the years.

The Shaver and Bromme relationship has earned 15 championships along the way in California Racing Association (CRA) and United States Auto Club (USAC) competition. Shaver has two WoO titles working with Woodruff and another four with Donny Schatz.

Along came Brent Kaeding in 1985 and with that relationship came 16 Northern Auto Racing Club (NARC) and Golden State Challenge Series titles in California.

In addition to those won by Schatz, Dave Blaney and Bobby Davis, Jr., have WoO crowns powered by Shaver Engines. Ron has also claimed six Knoxville Nationals titles, five by Schatz and one by Blaney. "We were the first winner of the Historical Big One at Eldora with Jac Haudenschield. We won that race seven times and we have six Kings Royal titles," Ron said. Shaver has also claimed four USAC national titles to his credit. There is a seemingly endless list of drivers who have found success hooking up with Ron Shaver and his engine-building company. The list includes Danny Smith, Ron Shuman, Doug Wolfgang, Steve, Mark and Karl Kinser, Brent, Tim and Brandon "Bud" Kaeding, Danny Lasoski, Shane Carson, Jerry Stone, Bobby Davis, Jr., Donny Schatz, Keith Kauffman, Lynn Paxton, Sammy Swindell, Stevie Smith, Jac Haudenschield, Frankie Kerr, Joe Saldana and Jason

Meyers to name a few. Other Shaver-powered winning owners and drivers include Don Lamberti, Gil Sonner, Daryl Saucier, Don Drou, Jr., A.J. "Skip" Jackson, Mike Brooks, and Garry Rush, Sr. "Those guys all helped keep me going," Ron said.

Among the many car owners that had sprint cars that were Shaver powered include Spurlock, Jack and Carol Elden, Al Hamilton and family, Beverly and Casey Luna, Danny and Diane Schatz, Bruce Bromme, Jr., and Sr., Stan Shoff and Ron Chaffin. The list of owners, mechanics and drivers also includes Dave Blaney, Mike Spencer, Lealand McSpadden, Richard Griffin, Rip Williams, Natalie Sather, Kenny Woodruff, Billie Albini, Ricky Warner, Lloyd K. Stephens, Fred Rahmer, Jack and Bonnie Elam, Norman "Bubby" Jones, Dean Thompson, Tony Stewart, Damion Gardner, Bud Beavert, Bob Miller, Shane Stewart, Vern Rengen, Tommy Hunt and family, Ted Halibrand family, Stu Hillborn and family, GM Racing, Rick Ferkel, Jack Jory and family, Parnelli, P.J. and Page Jones, Dave Helms, "Sonny" Kratzer, Jimmy Sills, Jim and Jeff Rasmussen, the Agajanian family, Don Pylant and family, Joe Herrera and family, Brad Doty, Kevin Gobrecht and Dale Blaney.

Employees Eddie Hansen, Craig Johnson, Dan Brewer, Dennis Hardesty, Don MacAskill, and George Shaver were also instrumental in the success over the years at Shaver Racing Engines. "I took what I was given over the years and helped build great horsepower. The motors had to be reliable and have the ability to run all day," Ron added.

Ron was one of the first sprint car builders in the country that had a Heenan-Froude dynamometer. Brian McKay helped Ron install the dynos. The first sprint car motors Ron built were the old cast-iron engines, before they got phased out and replaced by the aluminum engines.

Ed Donovan was instrumental in helping Ron move into the aluminum motors. "The first aluminum engine we built was out of GM aluminum casting," he said.

He added, "It took us a while to figure out that the aluminum engines had to run a little hotter than the cast iron motors."

Ed worked side-by-side with Ron to perfect his aluminum block and to make the engine successful. Ed made sure that Ron had everything he needed at all times. Today, Donovan and Shaver maintain a close relationship, and Kathy Donovan continues to ensure Ron has everything they need.

"Testing took place 24/7 just to get it perfect. No one had made the switch to the aluminum motors, so we were a step ahead of the competition," said Ron.

"We started winning races as soon as we put them in," he commented.

"Daryl and Cindy Saucier were also very instrumental in pioneering the aluminum block with Sam Bowers," Ron replied.

Earl Gaerte, was building quite a reputation as one of the top-notch engine builders himself. "Earl was very successful at what he was doing. Earl had made a mark in the sport and he got me motivated to get better-and-better all the time," Ron said.

"I've always had that inner will to be the best," Ron added. "Here I am, into my 60s and I'm still going full-steam and I

still like what I'm doing."

"When we first got going our engines cost slightly more money, but they were durable and reliable," Ron said.

According to Ron, you could spend less money, but you might not get as many nights on your motors as you got out of a quality Shaver racing engine. As Ron replied, "Back in the day there were no weight rules and regulations on the motors. Motors that used to cost in the neighborhood of \$9,000 now go for \$55,000 to \$60,000 for a world-class World of Outlaws motor. If rules weren't in place today, those same motors would cost in the neighborhood of \$100,000," Ron said.

The Shaver Specialty Company builds more than just sprint car motors. "I've helped supply Billy Moyer with late model motors. He's won the World 100 with our motors four times. In about a 10-year span, Billy won almost 250 features," he said.

He added that Scott Bloomquist, another late model driver, who is among the best in the business, also ran the Shaver engine. Ron commented, "I remember Scott came riving up to our place one day in a '57 Chevy. I remember getting notified that whatever Scott needed, get him fixed up and just send him the bill. The next thing you know he's winning 40 to 50 races and winning everything in the world."

"We've won virtually every big race there is to win in the world. About the only race I haven't won is the Turkey Night Midget Grand Prix race," he said.

Ron Shaver is currently building vintage stuff, as he calls it. Anything from Trans-Ams to old Indy cars, and even hot rods.

Shaver Racing Engines went from Ron and one full-time man producing 10 motors in 1978 to building up to 300 motors with a staff of 18 people in 1986.

In 1986, Ron was the supplier of 17 of the 24 sprint cars that started the "A" feature at the Knoxville Nationals in Iowa. "The only bad deal with having 17 Shaver engines in the field, only one guy can win the race," Ron said.

According to Ron, it's easy to spot people in his shop who build engines. "The guys building the engines are more grumpy than the other employees. Of course, they have the pressure of keeping them running too," he said.

Ron is married to a former Knoxville Nationals queen. Livian Cook from Grinnell won the Nationals queen's title at Knoxville Raceway in 1984.

Ron Shaver lists himself as the vice-president of the company, while his father George Shaver, Jr., is shown as the president. "Dad is 88 years old, and he still shows up at the shop every day at 10:00 a.m. And he's a big help," Ron said.

Shaver Specialties continues today in Torrance, California. Ron Shaver continues to partner with engine-builders Dan Gentrup and Bob Westphal on Shaver-Wesmar Gear Drives.

**Ron Shaver**  
**Thank You For Your Many Years Of**  
**Patience And Perseverance And**  
**Congratulations To All The Inductees!**  
**From Casey & Beverly Luna & #10**