

HOT ROD HOODLUMS BONNEVILLE-EL MIRAGE

TWO ALL-TIME FASTEST CAR CLASS RECORDS

FOUR VINTAGE BIKE RECORDS

AN INTERVIEW WITH JIM JARD

By Bill Hoddinott

The Hot Rod Hoodlums team of Houston, Texas, has been racing at Bonneville for a long time. The Gas Rear Engine Modified Roadster and Street Roadster classes have a number of records to the team's credit back to 2011 when Jim Jard got in the 200 MPH Club with a 229 mph record in C Street Roadster class.

Jim founded the Hot Rod Hoodlums club in Houston back in the late '90s as a street rod club, and after a few years the club got interested in Bonneville racing. Always a fun-loving crowd that sometimes pushed the rules to the limits, and an un-named SCTA official hung the present moniker on them at the time of some long-forgotten incident at Bonneville. They liked the name, so have kept it ever since.

The Hoodlums went to all THREE Bonneville meets this year, which represented a lot of work and travel, to run their two racecars, but the results were SENSATIONAL! Two class records which represent the all-time fastest speeds in their car categories, and with only relatively small C engines! At Speed Week on August 12, driver Lee Dickerson drove their C BGRMR to a 263.286 record, fastest time ever for a BGRMR in any class. At World Finals, driver Ro Yale drove their C BSTR car to a 260.045 record, far and away the fastest Blown Street Roadster car, in any engine class, ever. The Hoodlums also have a bike division with two vintage Triumphs for the 750 class which set four records this year between Bonneville and El Mirage, ridden by Skip Kennedy and Alp Sungurtekin.

Your scribe was impressed with these achievements this year and I wanted to find out how they did it. Was able to get in touch with Jim Jard through his pal Alp, who rode his own Vincent special to a 193 mph record this year in vintage fuel mc 1000cc class. Jim proved great fun to interview, stories and enthusiasm pour out of him, and he obviously has a deep

love for Bonneville racing! He gave this interview for the readers of the Bonneville Racing News:

Bill Hoddinott: Jim, first off, thank you for taking the time to give an interview to the readers of the News about your successes at Bonneville and El Mirage and the history of the Hot Rod Hoodlums in general.

Jim Jard: Sure, Bill, I'm glad someone is interested! But the very first thing I have to tell you is a big reason for our successes at Bonneville has been KEITH DORTON. Keith is a professional NASCAR engine builder of long standing in North Carolina, and down through the years right up to this year, we have depended on his Small Block Chevy engines of the SB2 type General Motors built for racing. My friends and I know the way from Houston to his shop in Concord, NC very well and have been back and forth many times to pick up fresh engines and carry our old ones back to him for freshening after each year at Bonneville. Not only that but Keith and his son Jeff come out to Bonneville with us to look after their engines at the meets. Keith has had so many years of experience that he knows exactly what parts will give the power, and hold up, and he endurance-tests each unit on the professional dynamometer at his shop before we put them in a car. This way you know when you get the car out to the meet, the engine is going to perform, and be reliable. And when you're talking gas engines that put out the figures his do, you know they have to be good to hold up running on the Long Course. We have the whole rest of the cars to build and make reliable, in Houston, but we can leave the engines entirely to Keith.

Bill: This reminds me of what Bob Sirna said in the first part of his Mercedes-Benz Gull Wing story, about finding the very best professional shops to build your engines for Bonneville, pay what it costs, and save yourself a lot of frustration! I can see that for the teams that can afford it, but there are still plenty of Bonneville car and motorcycle classes where low-budget teams can build their own equipment with a lot of hard work, enthusiasm and research, and set records. But the low-budget teams will find a steep learning curve to build record-breaking equipment against their competitors and it might take them a few years to get there.

Okay, besides yourself, who are the Hot Rod Hoodlums?

Jim: Our team last year beside Ro Yale, included Damon Detmer, Lee Dickerson, my son James Jard, Skip Kennedy, Corey Severa, Robert Stookey, Alp Sungurtekin, Tom Teska and Brad Whitworth. Other friends have come and gone in our team over the years and crewed, and I am grateful to every one of them. And above all, to the core group here.

Bill: Tell us about the various engines you have used for your records.

Jim: It will be up to Keith Dorton to tell you the details, but as a seasoned Nascar engine builder he has specialized for a long time in the Chevrolet SB2 engine which is a GM product intended for serious long-distance racing based on the familiar Small Block which has been around since 1955. But with an iron block strengthened in every department. When you have your car in the Daytona 500 with a spec engine that puts out around 920 horsepower at 9000 rpm, and you're running it for 500 miles that way, you know it has to be tough as well as powerful! This is the engine Keith builds us to run in C Class, and the larger one for B Class puts out 970 horsepower at 8300 rpm. We used Procharger centrifugal blowers on the C engines he built for this year's records and they put out 1350 horsepower. But Keith feels that power figure is going too far beyond what the SB2 engine was designed for, so we are switching over to the LS series of engines for blown classes from now on. We will continue to use the SB2 for naturally-aspirated classes.

Bill: You sent me a confidential manual that contains all the original build data for your Rear Engine Modified Roadster. This is very impressive and I see the car was built for Bob Blakely in 2009. He had engineer Tim Turner do all the design work and I have never seen such a meticulously detailed book on a Bonneville car before! Then a year or two later Bob sold you the car and your team has raced it ever since.

Jim: Yes, it's a beautifully engineered and built car. We also have our Street Roadster class car, and we found a lot more speed for it by prolonged wind-tunnel testing and cleaning up areas on the car that the SCTA Rules allow, but many people overlook. When you get over 200 mph, small pieces on a car can drag a lot of wind and slow you down. So that 260 mph record is the result both of Keith's great engine, and careful wind-tunnel testing.

Bill: Where did your Street Roadster come from?

Jim: It was originally successfully campaigned by Ron Jolliffe.

Bill: Tell me about the rest of the powertrain in the cars, Jim.

Jim: Up through this year we have always used 4-speed Jerico manual gearboxes, three-disc Tilton clutches and Super Max Quickchange rear axles with open (not locked) axles. But we

think we're getting in a horsepower range now where we need to switch to Liberty 5-speeds with air-shifters and 9" Ford axles.

Bill: Very good, Jim. I think you have given us a good picture of your team's car program and now I'd like to go over to Keith Dorton for his story. First I want to tell readers that Keith has a fascinating video on YouTube that shows and tells exactly how he builds his engines, starting with a huge four-barrel on top, a manifold and heads with huge ports, and all the details. The engine in the video is the E engine he builds for you, which is an SB 2 Chevy running with two blanked-off cylinders to create a V-6. In the video are seen Keith and his son Jeff as they build the engine and run it on their shop dynamometer. I was able to reach Keith by phone and ask him about his engines. He proved to be a very friendly gentleman, happy to talk with a reporter about his engines for the readers of the Bonneville Racing News. Between what he told me, and the video, I learned a LOT about high-performance Chevy engines for land speed racing! Jim, thank you very much for telling readers about your car successes at Bonneville this year, and now I'll switch over to Keith.

I know you're proud of the four records your bike division of the HRH set this year at Bonneville and El Mirage, and after Keith's part of the story here, let's cover the bikes.

Jim: Sure, Bill

KEITH DORTON

Bill: Keith, thank you for taking a few minutes to tell me about the engines you build for Jim Jard, and congratulations on the sensational records the team set with them this year at Bonneville!

Keith: Sure, Bill, it will be a pleasure. Jim has been a good friend and customer of ours for many years. He's a man of exceptional energy and enthusiasm, and I can't count the times he and his pals have driven all the way out here from Texas picking up and delivering engines. And Jeff and I have a wonderful time meeting them out at Bonneville for the speed events to help the team run our engines.

Bill: I saw your excellent video about building the V-6 on YouTube and it's very educational, about exactly what goes into building this class of engines. The big valves and huge ports in the manifold and heads tell us what is necessary to get a big engine to give peak power up at 9000 rpm. The dyno test is also very impressive.

Jim's B, C and D engines are V8s, and you have also built him an E engine in V6 form. This means around 260 cubic inches. I guess you could have used a de-stroked crank to build an E V8, what was your thinking on this?

Keith: The B, C and D V8s we build are mostly identical except for the stroke. The SB2 block has such a big bore that we would have had to use a very short stroke to get down to E, and that means it's hard to get the compression we want. We get a better engine for E with good torque by cutting it down to six cylinders. This allows us to achieve a much higher compression, because of more cubic inches per cylinder. We use bobweights we worked out on the rear rod journal of the crank to keep good balance in the engine. This way the V6 has no more vibration than the V8.

Bill: A 90-degree V6 cannot have even firing. I remember years ago Chevrolet did this same thing by building a 90-degree V6 that was essentially their Small Block V8 minus two cylinders. They made a lot of them, but I had a ride in one and I could detect the uneven firing impulses of the engines. As if there was something slightly wrong with the engine, when there wasn't.

Keith: What you are saying is true, Bill. You must have been very sensitive to the feel of the car. I doubt many other people who drove Chevy Caprice sedans with that engine ever noticed anything. But the fact is the uneven firing order of our racing V6 is undetectable to the driver at the rpm range he runs this engine in, and thus of no consequence. It has no harmful effect on the engine to run like that. But you and I both know the latest generation of GM V6 engine has a 60-degree vee, which allows even-firing.

Bill: While I have this chance, Keith, to ask a man who really knows, there is another thing about the SB2 engine. I see that like all the other early Small Block Chevys, the two center exhaust ports of the engine are close together, like they first came out in '55. As everyone knows, in later years the newer designs of V8s appeared with their exhaust ports spaced out evenly on the heads. The new LS line is like this, and so were all the Big Block Chevys. The idea, obviously, is to space out the exhaust port heat on the head rather than have it concentrated in one area. The Cadillac and Olds V8s when they appeared way back in '49 had the center exhaust ports together, and even siamesed (2 into 1) rather than separate like the '55 Chevy. That would have been a worse concentration of heat. But when the '51 Chrysler Hemi and its descendants appeared, they all had the exhaust ports spaced out evenly.

I have been told, that when super-power Chevy Small Block engines with aluminum heads are raced, the two center ports being together can create an over-temp situation in the

head between the two ports which can make the head want to buckle up from the expansion of the metal a few thousandths of an inch, enough to let the head gasket blow in that area. How can this port arrangement survive with aluminum heads in 500 mile NASCAR races and so forth?

Keith: That is a good question, Bill, and a good point. But there is a good answer. Long ago NASCAR racers discovered this area would give trouble just like you describe with the stock block and water pump arrangement. We learned to overcome it by putting a fitting in the block under this hot area on each side, and routing the coolest water we have, from the radiator through the water pump, to them. This way the coolest water goes up in the block and into this area of the heads, and is successful in keeping the head cool enough to avoid that distortion issue that could lead to gasket failure. Needless to say, a street engine is one thing and a race engine is another. Street and road engines don't see that much heat and this is why something like 50 million Small Block Chevy engines were built for cars and trucks since '55 and have been so successful with the original layout of the center exhaust ports.

Bill: Thanks for that explanation, Keith. You are right about the street and road Small Block V8s. I own a '96 GMC pickup with a 350 Small Block of the old style, with the original towing package, and it has proved to be an unbreakable workhorse. I used it to pull my enclosed trailer with my vintage Ardun roadster in it to ECTA meets for years, and never a minute's trouble.

Jim told me you will be building him blown engines based on the new LS series from now on, because you think the blower makes too much power for the SB2 to handle reliably.

Keith: That's right, Bill, we got the records this year but we are really pushing the SB2 too much at 1350 horsepower. We feel the SB2 with its large bore and mostly light weight components should be limited to around 1,000 HP for the durability required for five mile runs. It doesn't pay to try to use equipment beyond the stresses it is designed for.

Bill: How much manifold pressure have you used with the blown engines?

Keith: About 14 psi.

Bill: Keith, I think we've covered about everything. Thanks again for speaking with me, and again, congratulations on the successes of your racing engines in Jim's cars at Bonneville this year.

Keith: Thank you, Bill, I enjoyed it.

HOT ROD HOODLUMS BIKE RECORDS

Bill: Jim, let's look at your two Triumph bikes used for four records between Bonneville and El Mirage last year.

Jim: Sure, Bill. Our team is proud to have the world's fastest naked 750cc class modified production vintage Triumphs in the world! There are two bikes. One of them we acquired recently from Keith Martin at Big D Cycle in Dallas. His shop built it way back in

'95 to race at Bonneville. Alp built a new engine for it, and also the other bike. He built the whole bike for the second engine. Both engines are the same, originally 1955 Triumph 650s, but they are bored over the limit for 650 class, so they run in 750 class.

I want to say we Texans are proud of the history of Triumphs in Texas, and Big D Cycle has a direct connection with it. So if you don't mind, Bill, suppose we look over a little of that for the record in Bonneville Racing News, while we have a good chance.

Bill: By all means, Jim. I see there is a good history of it in the story of Jack Wilson, the famous Triumph tuner, on the AMA Hall of Fame website.

Jim: Jack Wilson was a great Triumph race engine builder for many years from the early 1950s on. He built a lot of successful fuel-burning Triumph dragsters, and that's how he learned nitro. The story is he went to work about '51 for Pete Dalio's Triumph shop

in Fort Worth, and was working there as a mechanic when airline pilot Stormy Mangham got the notion in '53 or so to build the world's first motorcycle streamliner of the 'cigar' type which has come down to us today. At the time the German NSU company had

the official FIM World MC Speed Record at 180 mph from '51 with their blown 500cc bike, which was a carefully-developed streamliner shell over a conventional frame. In fact, the bike was their pre-WWII GP road-race bike, which had been resurrected from the

ruins of the factory after the War.

In 1955 Russell Wright of New Zealand took the official FIM World Record from NSU with his 1000cc Vincent Black Lightning, at 185 mph. Russell's bike had a conventional Vincent frame with a streamlined shell on it patterned after the '51 NSU.

In '56 NSU came to Bonneville with the same bike as in '51, with FIM sanction, and raised their '51 speed to 210 mph for a new FIM World Record.

Later in '56 Mangham and Wilson and their team brought their new streamliner, called "The Devil's Arrow", out to Bonneville. Their rider, reportedly a full-blooded Native American, was one Johnny Allen, and Allen ran the bike at an event not officially sanctioned by FIM, to a timed speed a little faster than NSU's official 210 figure. Over the next few years they ran the bike (re-named "The Texas Ceegar") at Bonneville several more times, and even faster. But they never ran it at an FIM-sanctioned event, so they were never credited with the FIM Official world record.

Bill: Jim, I am so OLD that I clearly recall reading this story in the cycle magazines in the mid-'50s. I was already a motorcyclist myself. Recall being impressed that "The Devil's Arrow" was said to be running an all-iron (head and barrel) Triumph Thunderbird engine built by Jack Wilson, which was running on nitro straight from the can, with NO external air scoops on the body! In other words, the engine had to run with cooling provided only by the internal throughput of its own fuel. The success of this showed that Wilson definitely knew what he was doing!

Another thing about the streamliner that struck me and still does, is that the rider's head was sitting up exposed on the top of the machine, with a small windshield, and protected only by what looked like a skimpy roll bar behind his helmet. I don't know what type

of safety harness he had, if any, but if the machine had rolled, I think his head would have been in a lot of trouble, unless it was possible for him to duck down a lot! Which I doubt. But, in fairness, this was early days and few if any cars at Bonneville had much in the way of roll cages and good safety harnesses yet.

Jim: Okay, Pete Dalio eventually retired, and Jack Wilson opened up Big D Cycles, and was a very successful Triumph dealer for years and years. According to his Hall of Fame entry, he was selling over a hundred new bikes some years. Texas has always been a good motorcycle market. Eventually Jack retired and was succeeded by Keith Martin, who has a great shop, and that brings us up to now.

Bill, to get down to the Bonneville and El Mirage records the two present bikes set in 2021, here is the list, right out of SCTA and USFRA records online:

Skip Kennedy, May El Mirage, 750 M V G, 115 mph

Alp Sungurtekin, Bonneville World of Speed, 750 M V G, 129 mph

Skip Kennedy, Bonneville World Finals 750 M V F, 128 mph

Alp Sungurtekin, Nov. El Mirage, 750 M V G 124 mph

Bill: Jim, I think that covers everything pretty well, so thank you for giving this interview to the readers of the News, and best of luck to you and your team in 2022!

Jim: Thank you, Bill. It was my pleasure.

End

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