

304 BFS RECORD AT EM

283 BFR RECORD AT BONNEVILLE

248 FL RECORD AT EM

AN INTERVIEW WITH KC LEGGITT POLK

By Bill Hoddinott

KC Leggitt Polk (AKA KC Payne), of Prescott Valley, Arizona, has a long history at Bonneville and El Mirage. Now 56, he has worked for Centerforce Clutches for 40 years, from pushing a broom to his present title of Engineering Manager. Centerforce Clutches, now in Arizona, was established by the late Bill Hays, famous in the '50s and '60s for Hays racing clutches. Centerforce is one of the top manufacturers, supplying clutches to the big Detroit automakers like GM, Ford Racing, Toyota and Mazda; also speed shops like Jeg's and Summit Racing. Centerforce has about 30 people on the payroll nowadays.

Kevin Charles Polk was born in Flagstaff, Arizona in 1966 and the family moved to Southern California when he was a small boy. Due to divorces and remarriages, his name changed first to Payne, and then when he was 11 his mom married Les Leggitt, who raised him (and his brother Tom). In more recent times KC, as he was always known, chose to change his surname back to Leggitt Polk. His brother Tom Payne runs a printing company in Arizona, to include T shirt printing.

KC is fun to talk with, being full of energy and enthusiasm, and knows everyone around Bonneville and El Mirage racing.

Being raised as a teenager by Les, needless to say KC was up to his neck in Les' Bonneville and El Mirage racing and took to it like a duck to water. As soon as he was old enough, he licensed at El Mirage, and soon made his mark as a talented and fearless driver of really fast cars. In '90 he set the then-all-time Blown Fuel Roadster record at Bonneville at 283 in Les' car. That mark stood for over two decades. His famous 304 record in C BFS at El Mirage (Les' Lakester with trailer fenders) still stands in the book since 2001. His word to describe Les' blown fuel cars is "AWESOME". The rest of us can understand why! Without more ado, let's go to his interview:

Bill Hoddinott: KC, thank you for agreeing to an interview for the SCTA Racing News Magazine. I knew from the record book that you had a great story to tell. Your stepdad, Les Leggitt, is a good friend of mine, and he has told me stories about your successes driving his cars.

KC Leggitt Polk: Sure, Bill, I'm glad someone is interested. I read your articles in Bonneville Racing News for a long, long time.

Bill: I guess it was natural growing up with Les that you would go out and crew with him at El Mirage and Bonneville. And from that you would want to drive those super-fast cars.

KC: That's right, Bill. When I was a teenager Les was working for Global Marine where he would work 30 days overseas and then be home for 30 days. At home he'd work on his race cars and my brother Tom and I would help him. Then we'd go out to the meets and crew. Great people like Mike Cook, Bob Noice and Arley Langlo would drive for him. That was a lot of valuable experience. At the same time, I was taking all the shop classes in high school: wood, metal, auto, drafting. Not only this but while still in high school I worked part time for Bill Hays at Centerforce Clutches. Bill was like a second father and mentor to me.

Bill Hays was famous in Southern California for starting up Hays Clutches in the '50s and everybody used them for racing. They were so successful that Bill sold the name to Mr. Gasket, and they kept making Hays Clutches. More recently Mr. Gasket sold the Hays name to Holley, and they are still selling Hays Clutches. After selling the Hays name, Bill started up Centerforce Clutches, which has been just as successful ever since. In high school I worked part-time for Bill and after graduation I went right into his shop full time and

have been with Centerforce ever since. At a point Bill moved Centerforce here to Arizona and I came with the company.

Bill: When I built my Ardun Roadster for East Coast Timing Association in the late '90s, I made the mistake of getting a strong coil-spring clutch for the engine, and it ate the thrust bearing on the rear main very fast. I found out too late I should have used one of your diaphragm clutches which work on a different principle with their over-center spring which is easy on the thrust bearing.

KC: That's right, Bill. We made both kinds of clutches at that time, now pretty much just the diaphragm style for our market these days.

Bill: What was your first driving experience on the track?

KC: When I was 17, Little John Harvey was kind enough to let me drive his '58 Corvette for my 150mph license. The officials told me to run it between 125 and 150 so I made some passes at 142 and then 163 to get some driving experience and my first SCTA license. The next year at Bonneville Les let me drive his blown fuel Hemi Lakester and I licensed in it at 226 mph.

Bill: What was next?

KC: I spent a few years gaining experience and driving our gas powered, blown Big Block Chevrolet Lakester. This car ran well, but never set a record.... At that point, we decided our team was better off with Chrysler nitro-burning engines. In '89 Les had his #500 Roadster ready for Blown Fuel Class. Al Teague had the record at 260-something. Mike Cook was lined up to drive the Roadster, but we ran into trouble with it.

So Les made a few improvements for the next year. In '90, out we went again to Bonneville. This year a well-known dragster driver was lined up to be our driver, but to everyone's amazement, when he got to the Start Line and was ready to go, he suddenly shut the engine off, un-strapped himself, climbed out of the car, said "I'm not comfortable in this thing!" And off he went back home then and there.

So, we're all looking at each other, and suddenly Les says, "KC, get your fire suit, you can drive the car!"

Bill: Omigod, KC, this was a pretty formidable challenge, since everybody knows most roadsters would just as soon go sideways or backwards as forward, and you'd never driven one!

KC: Too right, Bill! But I was young, fearless, and ready to go. So, I said "Sure!" Got into my gear and made a couple of easy passes in the car to familiarize myself with it a little. It was very delicate to drive, you had to keep a light touch on the wheel. You could feel that if you did anything rough with it, it would spin in a heartbeat. The engine was VIOLENTLY POWERFUL like all of Les' blown fuel Hemis. The exhaust noise was DEAFENING for the driver, and I had to put padding inside my helmet and use ear plugs to tolerate it.

The car had a limited fuel capacity in the tank inside the grill shell ahead of the engine. There was simply not much space available there. Les had utilized all there was, but with blown fuel the consumption was very heavy, so we never tried to run more than three miles with it.

Bill: I know the best place for the fuel tank with mechanical fuel injection is ahead of the engine so the fuel pump can be automatically primed and has the most natural flow to its intake. I did this on my Ardun Roadster, built a tank to fit inside the grill shell, and it worked fine. But I was only running avgas, and only a standing mile. How did this attempt with Les' blown fuel roadster end up?

KC: I set a new C BF Roadster record at 283 mph, which stood for a long time as the fastest Roadster class record. It wasn't easy, I was holding the throttle open and praying the car would stay straight all the way to the Three Mile, since it felt very light in the tail end, despite all the lead Les had built into the frame. But it held, and we were all very happy to get the record!

Bill: You were only 24 at the time, and not very experienced, so this was QUITE a success for you, KC! I know you were on Cloud Nine for a while after that!

KC: Indeed I was, Bill. But it was not too long after that I came down to EARTH with a THUMP! When we took the car to the November El Mirage that same year! We had plans to take the class record but ended up TOTALLING it!

Bill Hoddinott: Okay, KC, tell us what happened to the roadster at the November '90 El Mirage Meet. You had just set the all-time Roadster Class record at 283 at USFRA World of Speed at Bonneville, and it stood for many years until Davidson's 301 in 2010.

KC Leggitt Polk: It was mainly a case of driver error. The car was built with the seat offset to the left so I could see forward, past the blower and injector on top of the hood, and I could see to the left okay. But I could NOT see to the right, the injector and blower were in the way. This and some other contributing factors is how we got messed up.

In those times in cold weather at the EM meets like this one, the practice was to let the driver make a big left-hand loop away from the starting area to warm up the engine and oil and come back and start his run. Hence the name "warm up loop." After this day, I think that option was reconsidered for several reasons.

Anyway, we fire the car, and I make my loop out to the left and come back. Another issue is we have very little steering angle in the car, so I have to make a BIG loop. This brings me back too far to the right, and when I see the line of cones for the RIGHT side of the course, I think I'm looking at the cones on the LEFT side of the course! Actually, I'm off the course on the RIGHT side.

From there, I think it's time to go, so I apply a little throttle and slip the clutch to get moving. The car has Les' modified Lenco two-speed gearbox in it, and low is about a 150 mph gear, so I have to slip the clutch a little to get the car going.

Away I go, everything's fine, get a little way down the course on the outside of the Right Side of it, and notice up ahead, here's GRAY BASKERVILLE the Hot Rod Magazine writer and photographer, running to get out of my way! I think instantly, "Why's he on the course like that... he never stands on this side???"

Bill: Let me interrupt a minute, we all remember Gray Baskerville was one of the best writers on Hot Rod, did he commonly come down to El Mirage meets to cover them?

KC: Yes, he covered them for Hot Rod and maybe free-lance for some other magazines. He was the only professional the officials would allow down along the course in an exposed position if a car or bike went off the course.

Anyway, I still didn't realize I was off the course to the right and shifted the Lenco into high gear with the air-shifter button. Even though this is our little "C" engine, Lester's blown fuel Hemis had so much torque at all rpms, this car we geared for about 6000 rpm to achieve record speed in this class. Les had reworked the Lenco into underdrive for low gear, and overdrive for high gear, so we could use a 9" Ford axle. The roadster had a Detroit Locker in it, which locks the axles in drive mode, and unlocks them at other times which makes it easier to push the car around the shop or at the track in the pits.

I'm feeling for traction with the throttle, and the car's doing maybe 250 mph about a mile or so down the course, .3 mile left to the lights. I still don't know I'm off the course, and suddenly, without warning, the car SPINS!

Bill: What caused it to start spinning?

KC: To this day nobody knows for sure, maybe something in the steering broke, or maybe one of the rear wheels lost traction and the other one pushed the car into a spin. Or perhaps I hit a rut or something else.... Remember, I am off course and this area had not really been inspected or checked closely by race officials.

All I know is the car spun about a dozen times, and so much dust and dirt is flying around I can't see a thing!

It continues spinning on down pretty fast and when it gets down to the end right side of the course, it trips over

some dirt mounds and Thule bushes there, and FLIPS!

It rolled over a couple times and finally came to a stop. I unbuckled my harness and a past crew member/family friend who was first on scene, helped me out of it. He got in a little trouble for that with the ambulance crew, but I wanted OUT of that thing. Emergency crew comes flying down, but there is no fire.

Bill: Did you have any injuries from all that banging around?

KC: Fortunately, I came out of it with nothing but a broken blood vessel in one eye that went away in a week or two, and I had slight bruises on my shoulders from the harness. I probably had an undiagnosed concussion because I had a hefty headache for a few days. Of course, I was shaken up a bit, but got over it pretty fast. No need to go to the hospital, and I felt well enough to go to work the next day.

Bill: What about the car?

KC: The fiberglass body was destroyed, the frame and axles were bent, the injector and blower were smashed. We hauled the remains back to Les' shop and over the next few weeks we took it apart and salvaged what we could. The main engine and gearbox were okay along with various other parts. The roll cage had taken its beating without damage and protected me like it was supposed to. The remainder of the car went back to our partner at the time, Mr. Louie LaBash.

Bill: The car was designed by Les not to flip in a spin, and that part was good, but if it hit dirt mounds sideways, all bets were off.

KC: Right, per the class rules, the car only had a wheelbase of 110" I believe. I think the original '32 Ford Roadster had a 103" wheelbase. Our car was down low on the deck, and Les had filled the frame rails with lead buckshot, which gave it a very low center of gravity. In '90 the car was pretty much state of the art.

Bill: What was next?

KC: All this time I was working for Bill Hays at Centerforce, and Les was building engines for other cars and teaming with car owners. I went out and crewed with him sometimes to El Mirage and Bonneville and had a lot of fun.

In '94 two MAJOR EVENTS in my life came along. First, I married Fast Freddie Dannenfelzer's daughter, Shari. The other big thing was that Bill Hays decided to retire and the company moved to Arizona, and we moved along with it. Shari and I moved into a new home of our own, and we worked on that for a while.

Back in Garden Grove, CA that same year, '94, Les decided to build what became his famous Lakester, that set so many 300+ records at El Mirage, and the same car in which I did my 304 record in BFS with rear fenders. It belongs to Brandon Leggitt now and he has plans to run it at Bonneville and try to be the first lakester to 400.

Les got Mel Swain to make the frame for it, with a long wheelbase, 275 inches I believe. These lakesters look like rear-engine Top Fuel dragsters, but they are built of heavier tubing for more strength and rigidity. We learned from our early years, Top Fuel dragster frames are too flexible to make good El Mirage or Bonneville cars. It took Les a few years to get it completely built, and then he got Pete Prentice to drive it for him in the late '90s. They set some of the great 300+ El Mirage Blown Fuel Lakester and Streamliner records that are still in the book. Including a 300 MPH record at EM by my friend, the late great Larry Lindsley.

Bill: Before we end this Part, KC, tell me about something I've wondered about. The exhaust fumes of a nitro engine are strong, toxic and make your eyes water and your nose burn. How does that work on the driver?

KC: Good question, Bill. On the roadster when we fired the engine, depending on the wind, some of those fumes would get back to me and make my eyes water a little bit. I was sitting back in the roll cage in the open air, with a small windshield of course. Once I got the car going, the fumes blew out to the sides and I had plenty of fresh air, so no problem that I ever noticed. BUT the tremendous ROAR of the exhaust WAS a problem! Up in front of you like that you are going to hear it, in an open car! I had to pad my helmet carefully

to try to keep the noise out, and use ear plugs, otherwise my ears would ring for hours after driving it.

The crew in the push truck also suffers from pushing a nitro car, some of the fumes are bound to get in the cab, and this is part of the game they have to put up with.

Now on the lakester, the driver has an enclosed canopy, and it's a far more comfortable deal. The engine is behind me, and the pipes aim backwards, so on startup, little to no fumes get into the cockpit. And when I'm making a pass, most of the engine noise is aimed behind the car. The Lakester is much more stable than a roadster, so altogether it is a much easier car to drive, even though it is faster. The wing on the lakester makes a BIG difference in traction on dirt or salt by pushing down with a couple thousand pounds of force so you can get the traction to reach the high numbers.

Bill: Very good insights, KC, for those of us who will never drive a nitro car, from one of the few people on the planet with first-hand knowledge!

Bill Hoddinott: All right, KC, you and Shari moved to Arizona in '94 when Bill Hays moved Centerforce Clutches there, and you bought a new home, and worked on it for a while. There was a pause in your land speed racing.

KC Leggitt Polk: Well, from time to time we went back down to see Les and Shari's dad Fast Freddie, and we went to some meets. It was a six-hour drive to Hesperia where Les lives and eight to Santa Barbara where Fred is so we couldn't do it constantly. After we got our new home, we spent a lot of time fixing it up the way we wanted it, and working on the landscaping a lot. I was working full time at Centerforce, of course, and my responsibilities there were increasing.

Les got his lakester built starting in '94, and in the late '90s he had Pete Prentice driving it for him, and they set several BFL and BFS records at El Mirage. In this same period Fast Freddie also got his lakester up over 300mph.

In '00 Pete went off on another project, and Les asked me to drive his lakester. I jumped at it, of course.

We had it out at the May 2000 EM meet and I licensed in it and did a 259 pass. You need some seat time in a car like this, with Les Leggitt blown fuel KB Hemi power!

Bill: Let me interject here, KC, that Les' blown fuel engines make tremendous power and torque, maybe 4000-5000 horsepower, but one of the things he has told me a lot about, is that over so many years he has learned how to make that huge power with them, and unless something unusual happens, it doesn't hurt the engine! He brings it back to his shop, strips it for inspection, and usually it needs nothing but a few bearing inserts, set of piston rings, and freshening the valves. Okay, continue with your story:

KC: We went to the following June EM (we are using trailer fenders on the Lakester to cover the rear wheels and thus make it Streamliner Class) and I went 279 to set the BFS record, and that got me in the EM 200 MPH Club.

The next year, at the May '01 EM meet, once again we're running A BFS, and I did a 291 mph pass.

We came back to the June '01 EM meet, with a little better tune-up, and on my third pass went 304 MPH on the dirt!

Our team was highly elated about this and once again, the driver was on Cloud Nine! At the time, there were only four of us who had ever gone over 300 at El Mirage. My father-in-law Fast Freddie is one of them and he used to tease me that of the four, I was the slowest. And that was okay!

The four were Carr, Dannenfelzer, Leggitt Polk and Prentice. The next year, '02, Les lined Larry Lindsley up to drive the car and he did a 308. So, you can see why Les' lakester is a legend at El Mirage!

Bill: While we've got this chance, KC, how about walking us through everything involved in making a pass in Les' lakester as you recall it.

KC: Sure, Bill. To start with, we plan to get out there early and be one of the first to run, for the best possible course. The points from the previous year play into this.

We have the car full of oil and fuel, tires aired up, and our push truck pushes it to the line.

Bill: Let me break in here, KC, and would you tell us about the tires.

KC: Mickey Thompson Bonneville rear tires, 34x8x18 inflated to 80-90 psi. You vary the pressure a little bit to get them to the same circumference measured with a tape. The 9" Ford axle is locked so you want as close as possible to have both tires driving equally. If one's a little larger than the other, it might tend to steer the car a bit.

The front tires are M&H Frontrunners 26x6x18 inflated to the same 80 or so. The steering on the car is slow, you don't want it to overreact to steering inputs.

Okay, you're at the start line and the Starter tells you to fire it up. The driver's in his seat strapped in, with the canopy open. He has to push the clutch in and hold it for starting since there's no neutral in the two-speed gearbox. He has the gearbox in Low gear.

The crewman squirts some gasoline in the injector for starting and applies the starter to the blower belt sprocket to turn the engine over. Driver switches the magnetos on, the engine fires, and starts to run on nitromethane for a few seconds to warmup.

The canopy is closed and locked, driver checks the oil pressure gauge (about 100 psi at idle). There's a tachometer, but the driver really won't look again at the gauges until he completes the pass. He has to watch the course!

The Starter gives the Go signal, the crew truck bumps the push bar, and the car starts to move. The truck pushes the car pretty fast, up to 50 or so, because Low is a 150mph gear. At this point the driver applies some throttle and slips the clutch to pull away from the push truck without spinning the tires (hopefully). A big part of the driver's job is to accelerate as hard as possible to reach the highest possible speed by the end of the standing 1.3 mile dirt course, but at the same time not let the tires spin too much because their slick tread is thin and they are EXPENSIVE! Due to the tire construction you have a contact patch about six inches wide x four inches and from there you have several thousand horsepower to apply to the dirt through this small contact patch.

Okay, away you go and at about 150 mph you hit the air-shift button and the Lenco goes instantly to High gear. You're at half track now and by about the one mile point you can finally and hopefully apply full throttle and push for the highest speed at the Timing Lights.

Through the Lights, cut the fuel off and pop your chute, and it slows the car right down. The crew truck comes to push you back to your pit.

Inside the canopy you have a much different feeling of speed than the sensation in an open car. The noise from the exhaust isn't too loud with the rear engine car. The long wheelbase helps to make the car very stable at speed. Crosswind doesn't have much effect on it, and the big wing on the back forces the rear tires down with a couple thousand pounds of pressure at the high end, enabling you to use maximum throttle without wheel slip.

All in all it's a comfortable ride, especially compared with the roadster I ran in '90 at Bonneville. The car feels good and not always on the edge of a spin like the roadster was with its short wheelbase.

The Lakester is one of Les' proudest achievements!

Bill: Now that Brandon has it we all wish him the best of luck. He did great things with Les' Beast Studebaker,

taking all five class records from D to AA at El Mirage.

What was next for you?

KC: At the next meet we ran a V4 engine Les made by using two cylinders on each bank of one of his KB Hemis, which gave even-firing. Otherwise, it was the same setup as his blown fuel V8. We wanted to take a smaller class record at El Mirage and had it out to the July '01 meet, but it was just half a mile an hour off the 260s MPH record.

Shari and I went home and I went back to work at Centerforce. About then we decided it was time to start thinking about children, and our daughter Kalyssa made her appearance in '04. Our son Kaden made his in '07. I made a decision that since I had a family to raise, it would be wise to pause from driving for a while and focus on family. Later on, there would be plenty of time to drive some more.

Bill: I think that was smart, KC, there is some slight risk in motorsports and when children are growing up, they need a Daddy.

KC: Right. But a couple years ago we decided it was okay for me to get back in the driver's seat of Fred Dannefelzer's #44 lakester and this led to setting a new C Fuel Lakester record of 248 at the May '22 El Mirage meet!

Bill Hoddinott: All right, KC, you took a pause from racing after '01 to raise your family and in May '22 you were back at El Mirage setting a 248 record in C FL. Tell us the story.

KC Leggitt Polk: Sure, Bill. Fast Freddie Dannenfelzer, my father-in-law, first built his #44 lakester way back in '96. He set many records and did over 300 in it at El Mirage. It is similar to Les Leggitt's #500, but a little shorter at around 260" wheelbase. Fred's #44 lakester is well built and a proven car. It too has a chassis purpose built for the dry lakes with an enclosed canopy, good aerodynamics and a wing for proper downforce.

Bill: Let me interrupt you here, KC, do you have figures for the front and rear weight distribution?

KC: Static weight balance, ready to go at the start line, is about 30% front and 70% rear, which is right where you want the weight for traction. Fred has a couple of rear wings in his inventory to choose from with an adjustable angle of attack for each. This allows for the right downforce assist at speed with minimal drag. It's always a balance for each, depending on the engine and class we are running. The rear wing is definitely part of the overall car tuning and handling decisions.

Freddie retired from driving just before he turned 80 in 2017. He then partnered up with longtime friend and driver Alan Fogliadini. Together they ran a small blown fuel Hemi for D BFL and went to the October 2020 Bonneville meet where Alan took the class record at 332 mph. At the November '20 El Mirage meet, Freddie had his unblown C engine in the car and Alan took the C FL record at 243mph.

2020 was a Covid year so we were able to take both of our kids to Bonneville for the first time. They could do online school on the salt and help volunteer in the timing tower. We had a great time, and this event really sparked their interest in land speed racing.

In '21, Fred partnered with another top-notch driver, Pete Prentice, to drive the #44 Lakester with the unblown C fuel engine. That year, Pete drove the car at Bonneville Speed Week to a 292mph record.

For '22 Pete had another racecar project going, so my Mother-in-Law, Patty Dannenfelzer, had the idea for me to drive the #44 lakester. After a little thought, I felt like it was time to drive again. My son, Kaden, also really wanted to get involved. He was 14 at the time, so it's a great age to get started. There is nothing better than to have a family of 3 generations working together for a common goal.

Bill: Before we get into the actual experience of driving the car, let's go over its technical content for readers. How was the engine built?

KC: Fred's C engine is a JP-1 aluminum block with water jackets (which never had any water in them because the engine is cooled by the throughput of fuel and the oil circulation). The heads are twin spark plugs and we run roughly 10 to 1 compression. Two MSD 44 mags on a front drive to light the almost 100% nitromethane fuel mixture.

Bill: This sounds very similar to the engine combination that Doug Robinson and Eddie Marlen used in their Roadster at Speed Week '21 to set a 307 record!

KC: Yes. Having driven a Roadster myself, I really respect that 307 record and what Doug and Eddie did in 2021. It's very impressive!

Bill: What about the clutch, gearbox and rear axle?

KC: Kaden and I freshened up Fred's Titan four-disc clutch with centrifugal weights on the levers at Centerforce. The gearbox is a three-speed Owens with air-shifter. The rear axle is a custom billet aluminum quick change Fred had made with the toughest gears available.

Bill: There's something for discussion. The straight-cut gears in the quick change are severely shocked when the drive wheels aviate on a bump and come down, and a very powerful engine is pushing out tremendous torque. And only one tooth at a time on each change gear has to take this terrific shock.

KC: True, and Fred has had some breakage of the change gears over the years, but he has a really good handle on what works best now. The quick change is very convenient and we are able to change the gear ratios at Bonneville or El Mirage to get the engine at optimal RPM.

Bill: I can see that. Does the Owens three-speed have a neutral?

KC: No, the driver has to hold the clutch in for engine starting and the push start, before slipping it to get going, just like Les' Lenco two-speed. In fact, for this El Mirage Freddie told me to use just two of the gears, not high gear. We wanted to get around 6500 rpm at the timing lights and this worked out fine. It only involved one shift.

Bill: There is a dry-sump oiling for the engine, where was the oil tank and what kind of oil did you use?

KC: The oil tank sits behind a stout bulkhead behind the driver, and Fred runs straight 70 weight oil for nitromethane engines.

Bill: 70 weight oil is very viscous in cold weather, was there a heater in the tank?

KC: Yes. The oil tank holds about 15 quarts and in mid-summer ambient temps are usually warm enough, so no preheating of the oil is necessary, but at World Finals on the salt or a November El Mirage meet with cold temps, you would want to use the in-tank electric oil pre-heater to get the oil up to 100-110 degrees before starting the engine.

Bill: The wash down of nitro gets into the oil, which then both contaminates and thins it out. I've seen what it looks like, a nasty yellow color.

KC: Very true, Bill. After sitting overnight some of the nitro in the oil will separate and settle in the bottom of the oil tank. We drain just a couple of quarts of the nitro off the bottom in the morning, and then top off with a couple fresh quarts of oil in the tank, then we are good to go. We can usually make two passes at El Mirage with the unblown engine using this method.

Bill: The fuel tank is in the front of the car, what's its capacity?

KC: 35-40 gallons.

Bill: Okay, how about telling us about your experiences and success at the May '22 El Mirage Meet.

KC: First of all, the race officials knew my history and all about my 304 with Les' car back in '01. That was a long time ago, so they wanted me to re-license by going through the Drivers Orientation on Friday before the meet and first thing Saturday morning. I didn't mind this at all. It's for everyone's safety, and I needed a fresh perspective with some of the new procedures.

After that, they wanted me to make an easy pass at 175-200 mph from the rookie line. We started the car with a squirt of gas in the mechanical fuel injection, and then warmed it up a little with our methanol tank before switching to the nitro. When the Starter gave the signal, our truck pushed me off and I slipped the clutch to get going. The car felt great and it really wanted to GO! It was a little tricky trying to watch the tach and racetrack at the same time. I knew right where 200 mph was on the tach, but I should have been watching for 175 instead. Lesson learned as I broke out of the 200 mph limit and got in a little trouble with the race officials, which I deserved.

They could have told us to put the car on the trailer and go home, but instead they allowed us to make another licensing pass from the rookie line and this time keep it under 200. I needed the seat time anyway, so I changed the tach reading for 175 mph, made another pass, and managed to hold it down to 189 or so. Everyone was happy this time. The SCTA officials are responsible for everyone's safety. They have the tough job of maintaining safety and discipline at these meets, so I respect their authority one hundred percent.

Bill: That is EXACTLY RIGHT, KC! What was next?

KC: Okay, the next morning, Sunday, we were all ready to go, the #44 lakester and I have the green light from race officials to run from the 200mph line. We went through the start-up procedure, pushed off, went through two gears. Just as I got to the lights at 248, a piece of the belly pan behind the front axle vibrated loose, scooped dirt right inside and through the bodywork, past the fuel tank and the dash, and DUSTED ME SO I COULDN'T SEE A THING! That was interesting.

However, I kept calm and knew all I had to do was cut the fuel off to kill the engine, pull the chutes, keep straight on the course, and stop, even if I couldn't see anything. I pulled the chutes and stopped pretty quickly, and the emergency team was there right away. I didn't have any problems with the officials. I just needed to climb out of the car and tell them what happened. Overall, they were pretty happy with how I handled the situation, so my 248 record was in the bag. Here comes my crew in our truck so I got back in the car and we pushed it to impound for record certification.

Bill: You sent me a great cockpit video of the 248 pass, KC and it speaks volumes about the build and operation of the car. Like all successful land speed race cars, it represents a terrific achievement by Fast Freddie the builder, and the crews and drivers ever since. I have to tell you, KC, I think the people who drive these super-fast cars are pretty exceptional. This is not for everybody, but you have certainly shown you have the right temperament and skills to be in the really FAST company.

KC: I don't mean to sound over-confident, Bill, but I will say when I get in the car, I feel very comfortable, and I have a good feeling of confidence that I can handle it. But I also respect what these cars can do. After all, not knowing the ultimate outcome is what makes it exciting right?

Bill: No question you have a genuine "flair" for it, KC. What comes next?

KC: I'm really excited about the fun we have had since May '22, Bill This is something our family can do together. There are three generations of us now with Fred, myself, and Kaden taking a great interest in land speed racing. My Mother-in-law Patty, sister-in-law Debbie, my wife Shari, and my daughter Kalyssa all enjoy being involved on the front lines racing the car and being official Bonneville timers. I can tell Kaden has natural mechanical talent and he's just turning 16 so he'll have his driver's license. He is eager to get into the seat of a race car himself and we'll help him do that when the time is right. Starting with the slower cars and from there he can go wherever he wants with it.

Bill: KC, thank you very much for taking the time to tell readers your story, I know everyone will enjoy it.

KC: Thank you, Bill, it was a pleasure. I have faith in our Good Lord and high hopes for favorable race conditions that leads to a fast and safe 2023 for everyone!

End

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DRM RACING

Kaden Polk - KC Polk - Fred Dannenfelzer
August 5, 2022

