

NITRODUCTION

No, it's not a typo. My name's Nitro and this is my introduction for you - to the "Bikesters", a word that describes not only the motorcycle-dragsters that I designed and built with the help of my friends, but also the racing team members who first tested, mastered and maintained them. People like Terry, TK, Celeste, me, of course, and, from time to time, even a young guy who went only by the name of "Nail" – plus a couple old guys named "Jim", and "Ben".

This is their story, and mine: a wild adventure of racing and discovery through the fifty United States, which began way back in the very beginning of the beginning, back when racing was still just a dare that you made to yourself and whoever else happened to be standing around at the time and somehow that always seemed to include Terry...

Terry and I hooked up together years ago, back when drag racing was just coming of age. For those of you who aren't real acquainted with the sport, it's two cars - side by side - from a standing start, and the point is, to see who can get to the finish line first – a quarter of a mile away. There's timers at the start and finish lines, (called clocks), in each lane, to tell you how quickly each car covered that 1320 feet – that's called your "Elapsed Time", or "ET". There's two more sets of timers, (sometimes called lights, or eyes), one set on either side of the finish line in each lane, they tell you how fast each car is going as it crosses the finish line, or your "Top Speed". One other thing, a car can actually go faster, or even quicker than the car in the other lane – but still lose! That's because after the cars pull up to the starting line, they wait for a light to turn green, (like a stop light on a street), before the race starts – so if one driver is 'quicker off the line', (has a better reaction time), at the start - - he can win, even if he runs a slower race.

I'd already tried out several drivers in my dragster, but nobody was quite right. The partnership between mechanic, driver, and machine, is delicate at best. It has to be just right to get the maximum performance possible.

I put that first car together from just a pile of pipe and a bunch of odds n' ends of engine pieces and stuff – and managed to turn it into a finely balanced, well tuned, racing machine. Terry picked up on that feeling right off: he and the car were one.

We won a bunch, racing around our home turf in Washington State at places like Arlington, Shelton and Bayview drag strips. Then it was off to Southern California to run top fuel at tracks like Lions, San Gabriel and Pomona, still winning a lot. We were plenty fast.

But then things started to change. It was costing more and more to race. We had all been getting a bit of help from the manufacturers - you know, engine parts, tires that kind of thing, and it helped us cover the expenses while they got their stuff tested and advertised at the same time, but soon, even that wasn't enough to cover our operating costs.

The racers who wanted to stay at the top level of competition had to go to the big companies, the corporations, for sponsorships. We got a deal from a soft drink company that kept us running at the top for a while, but some of the other fast teams were starting to get really big bucks. That meant that they could show up at a race with a spare engine or three ready to go, and a ton of spare parts. They could pretty much run us right into the ground! Unfortunately, most of the big sponsorships were coming from beer and tobacco companies, and we didn't want to go that route. Terry and I both liked the idea that auto racing was a sport the whole family could enjoy.

We didn't like the thought that kids would be coming around at the races or car shows and there would be the name of some beer or cigarette plastered all over our race car and truck and trailer. It would even be on our shirts. We would probably have to wear those dumb little hats with beer logos on them. Neither one of us goes out and lobbies for prohibition, but we didn't think that would be a good thing to throw in the kids' faces.

So we eased off and decided to try something new. We started a business up north and discovered that our years in drag racing helped us a bunch. Running a racecar (and running it well), teaches you to be meticulous and watch over the details, which pays off big time in the business world. We did quite well, but - well, we got bored.

So it was back to racing. Boats this time. It was plenty of fun, and again we were winning a bunch. We worked our way up through the classes to the top: the "Unlimiteds." But we found out once again that it was really expensive to race with the big guys, and once again the top dogs were starting to go to that same place for the bucks to be competitive, beer and cigarette companies. We just didn't want to go down that road. So we got out of boat racing.

Terry decided to try daredevil stunts - and after doing just about everything but blowing himself up with dynamite, he decided it might be getting just a mite dangerous. I kinda thought that from the start about the whole daredevil idea.

We made up our minds that we better get back to something we know. So it was back to our first love: "Drag Racing." The new cars, the top fuel dragsters and funny cars were really fast, but were also kind of smooth and predictable - just not exciting enough for Terry's taste. He was kind of stuck on the old days: you know - lots of tire smoke, noise and fire. You were never quite sure where the car was going. Terry liked to say "keeps you on your toes." Personally, I found running the "new generation" top fuelers and funny cars a bit too corporate for my tastes. It's a lot more fun for me when we can "wing it" a bit - I mean - these "new age" race cars are all right... they're just sorta well, all the same.

So we gave up on those and tried fuel drag bikes for a while. They were real exciting, but not quite fast enough for Terry's taste.

Then one day I was out in the shop, staring at one of our leftover top fuel engines that was sitting by a race bike and the thought occurred to me: why not combine the two? So we built a special bike frame, put the turbo-charged Chrysler hemi V-8 in it, and created "SuperBike"! Its fast and exciting enough even for Terry.

Once we got it running, it took a little while to sort out. For a while there, it was just a bit *too* exciting. But in the end it all came together. We found the right combination! It's been nothing but fun ever since.

The following story should get you started; should give you a pretty good idea of what *really* happened, who we are and how we first began. Everything from the formation of the team to the discovery and development of H²O-S mechanics, and a few other "trick" things we came up with along the way.

Enjoy the ride!

Nitro

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