



An unrelated search led to this stunning silhouette, an instant alarm ringing in my mind – oops, that was the name of a canopy car from 1954; I'd screwed up telling you the 1956 Glass Slipper was first, what a wake up call! Better yet, the awesome Blackbird's my all-time fantasy ride; an ultimate acceleration machine that you can enjoy hearing about from one of 37 dudes lucky enough to fly one of these awesome planes après reading these pages and pouring a beverage!



Tech Sgt Michael Haggerty photo courtesy USAF



Work began during 1964, in total secrecy at the Skunk Works - code name Oxcart!



J'st love the CIA's sense of humour...

words & photos
mike collins

The oxcart's a ponderous form of travel, but works, as did SR71, flying faster at mach 3.5, higher at 100,000plus feet, than any piloted plane; in 1974 it took a "rolling start" in excess of Mach 3 (2,000mph) and about 80,000ft above New York, reaching London 114 minutes, 56.4 seconds later; 3,488 miles at 1,817mph average with an in-flight pit stop - a new world record! Slowing down over major US cities slowed its return from London to LA, 5,645 miles in 3hrs 47:39 at 1,480mph! Us mere mortals take over 11hours, and rarely exceed 700mph, so SR71's average speed's bookin' it down the road; reason enough to recall we're a car mag, and return to the svelte Silhouette, an "unrestored flathead powered slingshot" that looked fine in the pits, but when push started by a '50s custom Mercury sedan (it was a rag top!), firing up in front of us and rumbling by at the 2015 CHRR, wow - talk about a blast from the past! Oh boy, forget California Dreaming, it's time to take off for some more funder at Famoso to celebrate my 50years covering Stateside racing, walkin' amongst drag racing giants and cackling fuel cars; okay, Mendy Fry's locked up her 2nd straight NTF title, but the CHRR race wins are up for grabs in all classes, and 3-fuel coupes are fighting for NHRA's HRHS AAFC title! Yeehaw, laissez les bon temps rouler...



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Some say they're cartoon cars, yet the Glass Slipper went 181mph on the salt in its day! But Stig Neergaard's 'toon's back at the FIA Finals was real, like these cool side-by-side race day action shots, with Miss Maja Udtian, whose new 3.806 FIA record wowed us all for pole, smoked 'em at the hit in E1 as RFM team mate Liam Jones got traction to win with E1's slow ET, a 6.73, 95.84, showing how tough it was for Top Fuel teams and fans! Anita Mäkelä's first win as 2019 FIA Top Fuel Champ, 3.93, 296.83 over Stig Neergaard's 4.06 was the closest race of the day, and his 254mph faster than all but Anita's speed on Sunday!

Wojtek photo



Wojtek photo



Wojtek photo



Tethys cruised to Low ET in Friday's disastrous Nitro night session, an 8.78, 76.45 ahead of Anita's 8.93 and 77.21 mph top speed, but his Low ET in Q3 was a legit 4.08, @ 279.40; his Mustardbet car out of Urs Erbacher's stable was ahead in E1 when the belt broke, Patrick Pers' won and his motor k'boom'd! But that's drag racing folks; anytime you add NitroPower into a big blown V8 anything can happen, more so on a chill day... Anita's win gave her problems and extra work for the crew. But the Auto Haapanen car led from Anita's wheels up power launch in E2, thundering away from India Erbacher's "Jasmine" in a blur of power to a blistering 3.82, 313.52 in E2 for race day's best numbers while tyre shake fired India's safety device to pop the chutes, slowing to a 5.98 at 97.09

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Wojtek photo



Wojtek photo



Explosion damaged panels once needed costly, time consuming paint jobs; 21st century wraps are fixed with a quick 2-step on a towel!

mcSnip courtesy SantaPodTV

A flaming victory!

Anita ran 3.85, clicked off to 297mph



mcSnip courtesy SantaPodTV



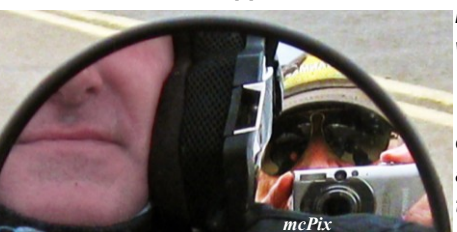
Moments after this shot Anita's motor lit up one side, carrying fire through the traps, still swathed in smoke cruising to a halt round the corner! Anita's race day domination was stunning, the only 3-second car with Low ET and Top Speed every round as all others limped home! I'd liked to have been there, but the day before was j'st as awesome, my entrance to the Pod was a unique first-time experience, except getting up on a motor bike was like mounting a horse, but my boots were on pegs rather than in stirrups, and we moved a whole lot quicker, Graham, who'd picked me up at the gate stopping soon as we'd cleared the traffic lanes to wait for his pal buying a ticket at the booth, then we were off again, the bike leaning, accelerating by cars stood in line, my face swept by waves of fresh air, images of [blasting across the Everglades](#) on a 4-seat Cadillac powered airboat at high speed coming to mind, a real hot rod, whereas today it'd be like a bus ride! Next my mind took me back to 1968, when



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the concrete perimeter track was very much part of the old airfield that'd become Santa Pod, a far cry from today's smooth, clean surface seen in this dust-blown image from the '80s; but unlike most hot rods this one wasn't cruising easy so the driver could chat with his babe, but driving slowly because of gaping potholes and "yumps," the name given by Scandinavian rally racers for natural earth "ramps" that when hit at speed made you fly! The drive that came to my mind had begun lacking velocity while moving through the pits, my daughter Sarah asking "Why are we going slowly?" Seemingly happy to be told about taking it easy amongst people, sat on my lap, not yet four years old, driving for the first time! When we reached the road I'd chuckled "But now the road's empty..." "We can go faster," she squealed, "Oh yeah," I replied, "Hold tight, now you're really driving," taking my hands off the wheel, giving it

a none too gentle goose on the gas pedal, smiling as she let out a "Wheeeeeee..." becoming attentive when I said, "Okay, turn the wheel gently for this bend," which she did; it felt good too! We reached the first jump, my acceleration got a "Thank you," and when told "Now I'm goin' to nail it for that big jump," she was laughing and going "Yey!" This I thought was cool, chuckling and saying, "Okay, time for some fun, so hang on," downshifting, hitting the gas, the power putting us kinda sideways, Sarah holding the wheel loose as it moved just like I'd told her, my hands ready to take it on hitting the "yump" at a semblance of speed, Sarah screaming with pleasure as we took off and flew, what a buzz! Then we landed; her head hit my chin, she turned to say "Sorry," turning the steering wheel too, oops!! Happily the moment I took it she let go, leaning back as I brought the car straight, fine brakes and suspension slowing us rapidly, not getting too much out of shape in Ernie Braddick's field that was thankfully dry and full of almost flat earth, raising a curtain of dust just like a burnout. Although she said sorry, it was easy to take the blame and ask if she'd like to drive some more, "Oh yes please, but maybe not so fast for awhile," smiling around "Thank you very much," before leaning forward and kissing my hand... "Where d'you want to be dropped Mike," Graham's voice snapped me back to reality, a downshift bouncing his face from the mirror, Pro Mod cars screaming down track made my



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Liam Jones' smile didn't stop tyre shake; he had to lift early, RFM's CBD car 3rd in FIA points again!



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Wojtek photo

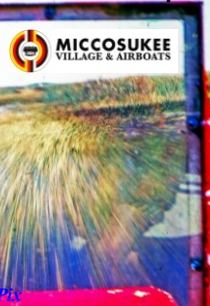
Looking cool, Team Auto Haapanen's hard work was rewarded when Anita and Levin Iglut won the race and FIA title for the 2nd straight year!



Wojtek photo



Wojtek photo



took me back to 1968, when



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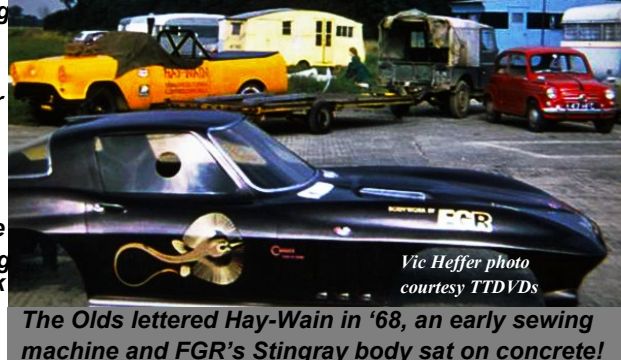
reply simple, "By the start line'd be cool," climbing out of the saddle moments later, standing tall with "Wow, that was a blast, the first time on a bike since um,..." shaking cobwebs out before, "A Vincent Black Shadow, both ways across Chesil Beach," bringing raised eye brows so I added, "Yeah it was pretty wild ride," then we chatted for awhile, sounds of horsepower thunder making it easy to say, "Thanks Graham, have a great weekend," walking off as mind movies took me back again to 1968, driving into the pits where someone suggested Sarah might like to drive down the track. "Oh yes," she beamed, "In a race car pleeeeeees!" Yeah right, but it was close...

Stu Bradbury offered the Dragreculturalmobile, a reworked Olds Rocket 88 Drag Control's David Owens bought from Chris Frost (Frost Autoparts) in 1966, and set about turning it into a rapid response pick-up, replacing the roof and rear panels with marine plywood adding a neat kick to the decklid; a true custom and lightweight too! The wheels were customised – split by an oxyacetylene torch, a 3-inch section was welded 'tween the halves to fit wide street tyres; apart from its muggy front end in this print, it looks kinda cool, just like Stu Bradbury on an early check out pass. "Can I come too please?" Asked my young lady friend whispering "Please," in my ear, her fingers fondling my neck, "No problem, j'st climb in and sit on the floor," touching my lips with a finger and adding, "Quietly please." She shrugged and did so while I lifted Sarah on board, Stu B looking serious as he said, "Y'll take it easy Mike," more statement than question. "Of course Stu, no problem," winking at Sarah as I put her on my lap, turning the key, the open piped V8 firing into life, sounding powerful, getting smiles from both the girls, although my lady friend still wasn't sure why she was sat on the floor; simple really, the Olds had no interior! "Emergency equipment" was packed under the "tonneau" cover of the pick-up bed and yours truly sat on a packing case! Having spent many hours on a similar stool whilst driving for Her Majesty on the Seven Seas, often during Force 9 storms, no thought was given to it, just got comfortable while some heat built in the motor, whispering in Sarah's ear



jbPix DragRod

"Okay blue eyes, the only rule is do not turn the steering wheel, got it?" Her eyes were sparkling as she replied, "Not this time, promise," my smile of thanks rewarded with a kiss, then she turned to face the track with "Right, I'm ready," grasping the wheel in a 10 to 2 position as instructed earlier. Thinking "Okay here goes nothing," with a big grin, shifting into D for Do it, moving towards the start line, staging slowly and telling 'em, "Right ladies, when the last amber flashes I'm gonna nail it," brapping the gas pedal a couple times, torque twisting the chassis against the brakes, my peripheral vision seeing a slightly nervous glance from the floor as I said "Hang on for the ride of your life ladies," easing the gas pedal down to load the transmission, then the lights ran and I nailed it, the light rear end stepping out a tad to squeals of excitement from Sarah and even a "Woweee," from me, thinking "What thef*ck" as the packing case kinda leaned backwards! Hadn't even noticed, but it was not bolted down! "Yeegah," seemed appropriate as I steered the car straight, adding "All yours Sarah," no thought of lifting off the gas, fresh air filling our faces, auto shifts coming smoothly, the engine roaring healthily, both gals now screaming the way gals do on any wild ride, then suddenly it was over, we'd run a high teen, maybe in the late 70s, which was way cool, the girls both thrilled with the ride, easing off the throttle, gently applying the brakes, Sarah asking to go again and, "Can I have a race car for my birthday please?" The answer was easy, "If you find one your feet can work the pedals on," sounding cool at the time, but then shortly later we passed a "for sale" sign on a V8 race car, so she tried it for size; no problem right? Oh so wrong; altered use high riding pedals putting the driver's knees in y'r face, screams of delight said they were okay for Sarah, oops! Luckily the V8 had a big fat tunnel ram with a pair of 4-barrel carbs she couldn't see round, easily telling her she'd need more than a dozen years before driving let alone racing! Took her out a few times on L plates, turning her loose in the Hugger at Long Marston; after the Pod's bumpy old peri track she'd no problem there. Although she never did get a race car, Sarah did get to fly a 747



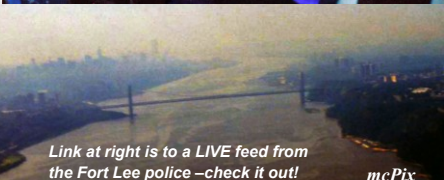
Vic Heffer photo courtesy TTDVDS

The Olds lettered Hay-Wain in '68, an early sewing machine and FGR's Stingray body sat on concrete!



Photographer Unknown

(not on the pilot's lap!), on the way back from Texas when the airline boss wanted to show his appreciation for the amount of business she'd brought them (after climbing to the top in a famous travel company), and it's an all-time favourite shot – can you imagine being "hands-on" in an awesome Jumbo jet, wow! Today we couldn't replicate the Olds ride in public, and no way would she get even close to her 747 thrill ride; talkin of which, having just realised publication of our next issue is close enough for rock an' roll to the anniversary of the Reverend Mr Miller's passing in 2002, thoughts turn to sharing a couple Slam'n Sam tales. A hero since his first oh-so-f*ckin' unreal 1978 power pass; strong winds blew the noise back to the start area, the Vanishing Point Vega lasered at me glued to track, moments later feeling an awesome silvery power blur Zzzzwapping past a feet away, so quick it stretched reality taking my knees and mind with it! We became good friends in the next few years, and soon after his never-to-be-forgotten 3.58, he asked me to visit and put some features together; after a truly long, hectic first day ending way après midnight, I heard, "See you about seven." "You're joking!" "No Mike, we take off at 7:30 sharp!" Not believing, or even understanding, I headed for bed, enjoying the clear night sky and sounds of hot machines from Lead East burbling past through an open window before hitching a ride on a shooting star, falling into bed, blasting off of on some astral travels in my dreams, snatched back to earth early when woken by Sam. And we did indeed take off at 7:30 sharp, flying up to Connecticut, taking care of business, had some breakfast then flew back for "A blast through the Manhattan skyscrapers!"



Link at right is to a LIVE feed from the Fort Lee police –check it out!

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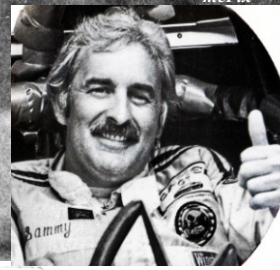
But the city was fogged in as you can see so Sam chuckled, "Hang on Mike, it's banzai time, suddenly flipping us up and over like a fighter pilot, straight into a violent power dive spittin' close to the side of mighty [George Washington Bridge](#) before pulling back hard on the stick returning us to level flight inches above the cold dark waters of the Hudson River; Machine Gun Alley he'd called it, threading the river banks with max throttle at minimum altitude, running outlaw all the way, and then some! Talk about Miller magic, an awesome and very personal memory, and so's this; we'd become far more than friends, my life often in his hands, like when we were thundering through a triple set of sweeping ess bends he muttered something about double apexes, reached over and took the wheel, so I let go and put my hands up for the first time ever, no problem! Henk Vink laughing out loud in the back seat wearing a wide grin; me too, my foot holding the gas pedal to the floor, my faith and fate well and truly resting in the hands of the world's fastest accelerating man. Which is bullsh*t really, I was happy, enjoying it all to the max; the Hugger exiting the curves fast an' smooth as Sam chuckled, "It's all yours now Mike," slapping my head almost gently, chuckling as he said "and don't you do that again," turning to Henk still laughing, now sprawled out, "Can you believe this guy Henk!" In telling of this magical experience comes the realisation of just how lucky I am in having had these two giants as friends, and how much we all miss their uniqueness. It's almost canopy car time, starting with our own Malibu Express in 1969 action...



jbPix DragRod

Received a press release a couple days ago claiming Sam ran 386mph on his 3.58 thunder run back in 1984! Couldn't believe that 35 years down the road they're still getting it wrong! So let's go Slam'n with Sam, late one night on my first visit to his New Jersey home when I said "This shot was taken on your 3.58 thunder run in the Mustang in 1984 and as you can see, that front tyre is really bent under. The others look like they're leaning as well." "So the car was getting ready to make a turn." "Which is when you backed off!" "How d'you like that," Sam chuckled, seeing the photo for the first time, "it's pushing the tyres off the wheels." "So what causes that then?" "Poor driving talent, or poor technique rather" "Well it's not arse out sideways," adding with a chuckle, "but, at 300 mph and accelerating, it's definitely gettin' there!" Its terminal speed was 285mph! And then there's the Oxygen, arguably the ultimate canopy car; during another late night chat I asked "What's the fastest you've ever been?" "Three eighty six, in the Oxygen." "Where was that one?" "We run, well I did that one in Florida." The pause probably because, as long time pal and engine man George Garboden told me some years later "Sammy never ran off the end of that track," laughing out loud "Because he's definitely afraid of alligators." But never afraid of going fast, and one day I'll tell you 'bout some outlaw desert thunder, but now here's what Sam told me about Oxygen before that 386; "It's a monster, it was the most uncomfortable, fastest car I ever owned, Oxygen was an evil car that I hated to get into." Grimacing around a chuckle he'd added, "I'd run 340, 350 mile an hour in that car and never had a straight run it," adding with a bigger grin, "you should've seen the ice run, the car drove like this," hands making a weaving motion. Sam's World Ice Record of 247mph in 1.6 seconds over 200ft on Lake George was "[The hardest thing I ever did.](#)" He thought the ice would be smooth and flat; it was anything but! For the record, Sam's fastest 1/8th mile speed was 319mph in 2.54sec in the 2001/R Vega, the quickest 1.60sec at 298mph in the 2003/R Trans Am

Slam'n Sam
mePix



Full frame width!



"Because he's definitely afraid of alligators." But never afraid of going fast, and one day I'll tell you 'bout some outlaw desert thunder, but now here's what Sam told me about Oxygen before that 386; "It's a monster, it was the most uncomfortable, fastest car I ever owned, Oxygen was an evil car that I hated to get into." Grimacing around a chuckle he'd added, "I'd run 340, 350 mile an hour in that car and never had a straight run it," adding with a bigger grin, "you should've seen the ice run, the car drove like this," hands making a weaving motion. Sam's World Ice Record of 247mph in 1.6 seconds over 200ft on Lake George was "[The hardest thing I ever did.](#)" He thought the ice would be smooth and flat; it was anything but! For the record, Sam's fastest 1/8th mile speed was 319mph in 2.54sec in the 2001/R Vega, the quickest 1.60sec at 298mph in the 2003/R Trans Am



Thanks Sam!
Slow down time...

In 1971 Sam made Canada's first 6-second pass in a Fuel Coupe at NHRA's inaugural Molson Grandnational!

His 7.01, 216.88 in a '71 Barracuda won the event too; the first racer to earn a Wally outside the USA!



Slam'n Sammy
ROCKET MAN INC.



Silhouette and its custom push car at CHRR 2015



Marc Gewertz photo courtesy nhra.com

Glass Slipper doing its thing back in the day

Photo courtesy lbad67 @jalopyjournal.com



2019's fastest race car; at Maple Grove DSR's Ron Capps' ran a [3.83 at 339.28mph!](#)

mcSnip courtesy nhra.tv



Malibu Express featured in Hot Car back in 1969; it looked cool at SCR in 2009 as Backdraft. Ol Nitro Nostrils shot Chris an' Claire earlier this year with the lid up celebrating its 50th!

Photographer unknown MercHouse BBLF



WINNER		
SMITH	RT	FORCE
.077	.110	
6.139	ET	3.698
102.00	MPH	329.42

Ant Hill Mob's Smax Smith ran his first three at ZMax, a [3.938 at 281 in Q3](#) and hole shot Brittany Force in E1, but smoked 'em as she sped to race day's Low ET 3.698 and a k'boom!



Andy Willsheer photo

Don Garlits' Swamp Rat 30, the most famous canopy car ever after its 271mph and wild up and over wheel stand at E'town 1986. [Don's laugh](#) and "I'm not that crazy," après is sheer magic! So's the clip; click and enjoy!

Photo courtesy NHRA

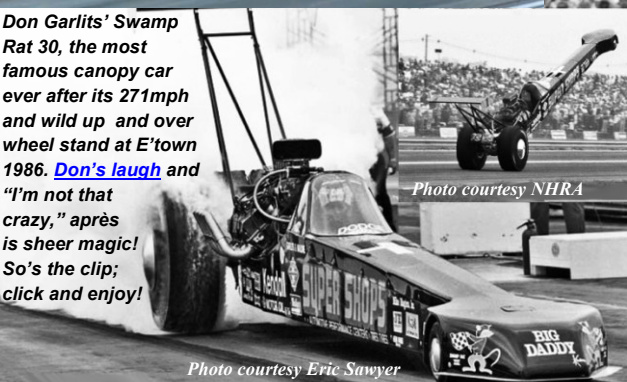


Photo courtesy Eric Sawyer



mcSnips courtesy nhra.tv

Brittany Force is the **quickest**, fastest fuel dragster driver on the planet with her new [ET record of 3.623 @ 331.61](#) next to Leah's 3.676 @ 332.92 (Maple Grove shown), and 338.17mph the [fastest ever Top Fuel pass](#) (3.659), at Vegas! Far out, but fuel coupes are still the [Kings Speed!!!](#)



mcSnip courtesy nhra.tv

