

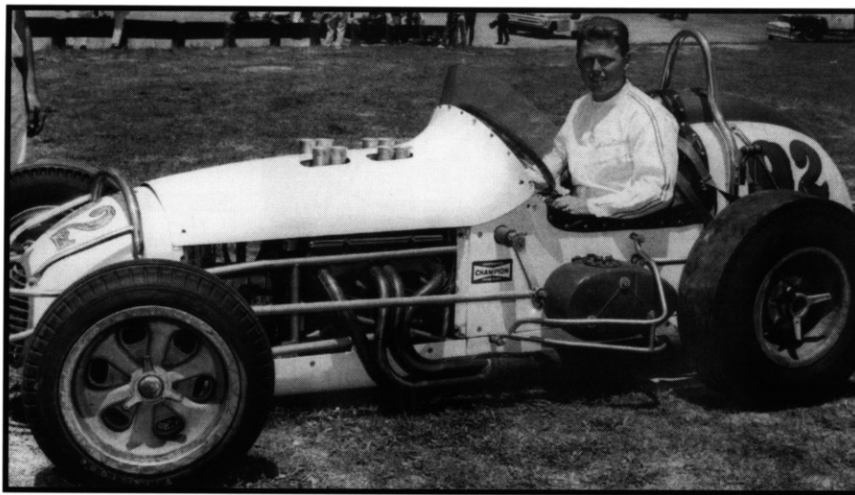
GREG WELD

Greg Weld was born in Kansas City (Mo.) on April 3, 1944, the second son of ex-midget racer Taylor "Pappy" Weld and his wife Ella. Greg had three brothers, Jerry, Kenny, and Ricky, who was adopted, and two sisters, Dee and Marilyn.

Greg started racing at age 16, just as his older brother Jerry had done, and as his younger brother Kenny would do two years later. Greg learned fast driving with his Ford flathead-powered modified and developed his own style of driving. Said Greg, "There was never any driver that was my idol. I didn't want to copy anyone. I just wanted to get good and win races."

By age 17, Greg was winning his share of super-modified races in 1961 at Olympic Stadium in Kansas City (Mo.) and at Lakeside Speedway in Kansas City (Ks.) with his Dad's 301-cubic-inch Chevrolet motor on weekends, but he was always back in school on Monday morning. He was even on his high school's football team.

And, in 1962 at the age of 18, he was making money racing with and against his brothers Jerry and Kenny on the midwest super-modified circuit. Regular win



Greg Weld

(Bruce Craig Photos)

sites included Lakeside, Olympic, Topeka (Ks.) and Knoxville (Iowa), where the Weld's were known as the "Kansas City Mafia". In fact, at the second annual Knoxville Super-Modified National Championship, Greg finished fifth behind Jerry Richert (Sr.), Gordon Woolley, Weld family friend "Tiger Bob" Williams, and brother Jerry.

In 1963, Greg beat Jerry to win \$1,500 and the third annual Knoxville Nationals after starting on the front row and leading all 25 laps. The fierce competitor

also won the 100-lap Midwest Nationals at Paragon (Ind.) with his family's home-built roadster, pocketing \$650 and \$45 in lap money. Later in the year, the Weld boys travelled to places like Oswego (N.Y.) and the Williams Grove Speedway in Mechanicsburg (Penna.) for their 100-lapper. Looking back, Greg said that those travelling days "were the happiest of my life."

Greg's adventures in '64 took him many places, but he was no more successful than at Olympic Stadium where he won ten of thirteen feature races. Greg tried his hand with the International Motor Contest Association (IMCA) and came away with two wins at Eldon (Iowa) and Sedalia (Mo.) in 24 starts, which was good enough for tenth in points. He purchased an Indy-sized pavement roadster from Chuck Chenoweth for \$5,000 and utilized it in his IMCA asphalt attacks of places like Anderson (Ind.) for the "Little 500" and Atlanta (Ga.).

1964 was also the year that the Weld family started a near riot on the front straight at Knoxville during the National Championships, allowing Greg to repair his

(Greg Weld Bio Continues Below)

car and come from row eleven in the feature to finish second to brother Kenny. Eventually Weld sold the pavement roadster ("it wasn't really a sprint car") to Ray Smith and his family's roadster to a guy in Minnesota.

The youngster started out the 1965 season by winning a preliminary feature and the finale of the prestigious IMCA Winternationals at Tampa (Fla.). The 21-year-old rising star also decided to move up to the 26-race United States Auto Club (USAC) sprint car series in '65. It didn't take long for the rookie to post a feature win at the Reading (Penna.) Fairgrounds against the likes of veterans Jud Larson, Don Branson and Roger McCluskey. Asked how it was at Reading, a cocky and straight-faced Weld replied, "It was just about the same as racing back home, except in Kansas City, I think they applaud harder."

It didn't take long for young Weld to receive a phone call from a car owner with a rear-engine Offy-powered Indy car. In May, he passed his Indy driver's test only to spin out into the infield while trying to follow A.J. Foyt. The USAC officials basically told him to go home and get more experience. Later Greg admitted, "I was 21 and I thought I was a hot dog. It turned out I wasn't. I didn't have the experience for Indy."

However, he continued to have success on the sprint car tour in his newly-purchased upright STP Special number 92, with many top ten finishes and another win at the Indianapolis Raceway Park in Clermont (Ind.) The point championship that year went down to the final race at Ascot Park in Gardena (Calif.), despite, or because of, a multi-race rough driving suspension that Weld received from USAC officials after an incident at his home track in Kansas City. All Weld had to do was finish eighth or better in the Ascot main event, and he would clinch the point title over Johnny Rutherford. Instead, he finished ninth and "Lone Star J.R." won the closest championship in history, 496 to 493.5 points. According to Greg, "You have no idea how bad that made me feel. I was really a despondent person after that. I'm as intense about my racing as anyone."

In 1966, he tried to qualify a Novi at Indy and crashed it. Immediately he was asked to step into another car and qualify it. But, again, he crashed. A disappointed and frustrated Weld went back to the deadly 23-race USAC sprint car series with a radical, low-slung roadster that was one of the three "mechanical rabbits" that were designed and built by the think-tank of Weld, California driver-turned-builder Don Brown and "Little Joe" Saldana. It was a mediocre year and he only finished eighth in points, but he later proudly considered it time well spent. "I learned an awful lot and I learned it by myself."

In 1967, he wheeled Dr. Ward Dunseth's Paul Leffler-built upright sprinter to the USAC national championship title over Sammy Sessions, Rollie Beale, and Larry Dickson. Weld won eight of the 34 events, taking the checkered flag at Reading twice, Terre Haute (Ind.) twice, Granite City (Ill.), Salem (Ind.), Kansas City, (Mo.) and Oklahoma City (Okla.). He was USAC's youngest-ever sprint car

champion at age 23. At Indy, he was unable to get up to speed, although he continued to make a couple of national championship starts as he had in 1965 and '66.

As young as he was, the disciplined and educated Weld had also matured, personally and professionally. He married a young woman named Marilyn and they lived in Kansas City, where he had invested his own winnings in a factory to build lightweight 12-spoke "Weldwheels" for racing and street use. Said Greg later, "I wanted to be in business more than I wanted to be a racer."

In 1968, Weld quit Dunseth and drove his own "mechanical rabbit" roadster again. In the early part of the season, he concentrated on working the bugs out of the car. Dickson won the championship, but as '68 was ending, Weld was battling Gary Bettenhausen for second place with wins at Reading twice more, Granite City and Ascot, Weld wound up third in points to the "Larry and Gary Show."

At Indy, Greg was signed to drive one of Andy Granatelli's STP-sponsored radical new wedge-shaped turbines. Weld's teammates included motorcyclist Joe Leonard and two Englishmen from the Grand Prix circuit, Graham Hill and Mike Spence. His teammates all excelled, but Greg's car was slow.

In his lone Indianapolis 500 race, Weld started 28th and passed eight cars, but dropped out after twelve laps with a burned piston and he finished 32nd. However, he did finish seventh in the Ontario (Calif.) 500.

Greg claimed three USAC sprint car wins in '70, one at Eldora in the Smith Speed Shop car, a second win there in the Paul Leffler car and another win with Leffler and Ralph Hulsman at Grand Rapids (Mich). He finished fourth in points behind Dickson, Bettenhausen and Beale.

In 1971, Weld cut back on his USAC sprint car schedule, only making ten starts. He did continue to compete in the newly-created USAC dirt championship car division finishing 11th in points. He also ran the Ontario and Pocono 500's.

The trend for Weld continued in '72 with just seven USAC sprint car starts, but he did capture his 21st and final USAC win at Penn National in Grantsville (Penna.). He drove his brother Kenny's ultra-successful ride, the Bob Weikert Livestock machine, to the feature win after consulting with Kenny at intermission on the phone about the chassis set-up. He also ran the Pocono 500 and finished 16th in dirt championship points. Said he of his declining Indy car career, "I'd been in business three years and decided Indy racing could be hazardous to my health. I had gotten one of

my eyes messed up. I wasn't comfortable going that fast because I couldn't see as well as I should. It was blurry and it was like playing Russian roulette."

Greg Weld drastically slowed his racing of USAC sprint and dirt championship cars in 1973 and '74, while devoting the majority of his time and considerable skills to his growing wheel business. He sold Weldwheels to Mr. Gasket in 1984. Mr. Gasket didn't want the oval-track business, so Weld kept that and started over as Weld Racing, Inc. By the late 1980's, Weld employed over one hundred employees and manufactured over 110,000 wheels

a year for stock cars, sprint cars, drag cars, trucks and other custom uses.

Greg also spent time as a Promoter of the I-70 Speedway in Odessa (Mo.). One of the track's featured events under Greg's promotion was the Jerry Weld Memorial. He also spent considerable time with his now ex-wife Marilyn, sons Christian and Taylor, and brothers Kenny and Ricky. Since 1974, Greg has made occasional forays back into the cockpit, including a sixth place finish at the '76 Knoxville Nationals, site of his eight career victories. In talking of his desire to race, the charter (1979) inductee of the Knoxville Raceway Hall of Fame recently said, "I miss it but I don't long for it. I feel very proud of my business. Life is a journey, not a destination."



Greg Weld

(Armin Krueger Photo)

He turned it over to Spence to test in practice, and Spence was killed when it crashed into the first turn wall. Weld was done at Indy for '68, but he did make a couple of other championship car starts.

1969 brought three more USAC sprint car feature wins in 20 starts, once in his own roadster at Reading with Ted Hall as mechanic, and two wins at Rossburg (Ohio) and Stafford Springs (Conn.) while driving for Ray & Sissy Smith. Greg finished fifth in points behind Bettenhausen, Dickson, Bill Puterbaugh and Sammy Sessions.

In 1970, Weld qualified at Indy as the fastest of five rookies. "Grant King was the builder and mechanic. I was Art Pollard's teammate and the cars were owned by International Car Wash Systems. Art was very personable, a very nice man, and they wanted to put his name on a chain of car washes. I was driving a sprint car for Grant and he asked me to drive it."