

BOB WEIKERT



Bob Weikert (NSCHoF Photo)

Robert Weikert was born on November 29, 1929, the son of Howard and Sarah Weikert. He has lived all of his life in the rural setting of Fairfield (Penna.), near Gettysburg. In 1949, he married his beloved Winifred, or "Winnie" as he calls her. Of course, when Winnie is not around, he calls her "the sweetest woman on this earth." They have eight children who have worked at Weikert Livestock, the family cattle business which was started by Bob's father: Jeffrey, Jane, Roberta, Bob (Jr.), Howard, Betsy, Cindy and Todd.

According to livestock dealer Bob, "I've always loved auto racing and my dream years ago was to actually own a race car. I used to go to Williams Grove and watch the great Ted Horn, Bill Schindler, guys like that. But it wasn't until 1971 that it happened. I used to go to Lincoln Speedway with my wife and my boys. One day, I decided I was gonna get myself a race car."

That year, Bob hooked up with transplanted Floridian and ex-Bobby Allen mechanic Richard Lupo, who owned a Don Edmunds chassis sprint car. After Lupo wrecked the Edmunds car, Weikert started a long association with Youngstown (Ohio) area chassis-builder Floyd Trevis. The first two times out with the TrevisCraft at the Jennerstown (Penna.) Speedway, Lupo won both features. Lupo and Weikert parted company at the end of the 1971 season. Bob recalls, "We had some big races coming up at the end of '71, and I was in my garage one day wondering who I should hire to drive. Next thing I know, here comes a car pulling up in front of the building. When the driver got out, it was Kenny Weld. We went into my house to talk, and within 30 minutes I hired Kenny as my new driver and gave him a loan to pay off some bills he had accumulated since he came to the area."

Their partnership was ultra-successful, and it occurred at roughly the same time that Jan Opperman was in the Dick Bogar sprinter, creating a legendary rivalry within the sport. In 1972, they ventured out to Knoxville (Iowa) for the national championships and they swept it, beating Billy Shuman, Lonnie Jensen, Eddie Leavitt and Jay Woodside and winning \$3,000.

In '73, they returned, this time with a wing on the "Weikert Livestock Special," and they beat outlaws Opperman, Bobby Allen, Rick Ferkel and Sheldon Kinser for the title. At the 1972 and '73 Williams Grove National Opens, the Weld/Weikert combination won again. According to Bob, "Kenny Weld is the only guy I ever knew who could do it all. I mean,

he could build the race car, build the motors, set up the chassis, drive it and win. We won at Knoxville with the wing on and with the wing off. It didn't matter, 'cause Kenny Weld could drive anything. I'd have to say the wins at Knoxville have been the most satisfying of my career as a car owner."

In 1972, '73 and '74, the Weld/Weikert combination clicked for over 100 wins, dominating the Williams Grove and Lincoln tracks. They won both track titles in 1972, and the Williams Grove title again in '73 and '74. And they won the Penn National track championship in '73. They also won races at such famed tracks as Hagerstown in Maryland; Selinsgrove, Reading Susquehanna, Bedford, Grantville and Port Royal in Pennsylvania; East Windsor in New Jersey; and Orrville and Findlay in Ohio.

On July 1, 1972, Kenny Weld won for Weikert at Lincoln, and older brother Greg Weld beat Lee Kunzman, Dick "Toby" Tobias, Jackie Howerton and Larry Dickson with the other "Mr. Beef" sprinter for a United States Auto Club (USAC) win at Penn National. And Bob loved to give victory lane interviews. According to Kenny, "I used to tell him, 'Look, you go out there and brag as much as you want, and I'll cover your ass.' He loved that."

Says Weikert, "I do it for fun, that's all. Plus, some of these people from the tracks will say to me, 'Bob, tell these people something. It helps us sell tickets.' So I help 'em out."

In 1973, they sandwiched the Nationals victory in between wins at the Jerry Weld Memorial at Odessa (Mo.) and the Jayhawk Nationals in Topeka (Ks.). They also had International Motor Contest Association (IMCA) Winternationals wins at Tampa (Fla.), a lone USAC win at Reading over Kunzman, Tobias, Bruce Walkup and Rich Leavell, and wins aboard "Old Blue" in the Tuscarora 50 at Port Royal and the 150-lap Pennsylvania State Championship at Lincoln. As for the heated Weld/Opperman rivalry, Bob said, "They went at each other like two tomcats. The funny thing was, Dick Bogar and I were personal friends. We never went to a race where we didn't talk to each other."

In 1974, Paul Pitzer, or "Captain Crunch" as he came to be known, joined to make it a two-car team racing primarily at the Selinsgrove Speedway. Weld won 29 times, including another Jerry Weld Memorial and another Pennsylvania State Championship, while Pitzer grabbed 13 checkered for Weikert at tracks like Selinsgrove, Penn National, Williams Grove, Port Royal, Lincoln and Flemington (N.J.)

Starting in 1974, Kenny began turning his attention away from the sprint cars and towards the dirt track modified stock cars. In fact, Weikert even owned and sponsored Kenny's home-built modified. Kenny also bought into the ownership of his favorite Lincoln Speedway. Looking back on his time with Bob, Weld later said, "I was a relatively young man, a long, long way from home, and Bob Weikert was like a second father to me. As far as racing goes, he pretty much gave me the keys to the family car, gave me anything I wanted. When a person bestows upon me that kind of faith and trust, I'll do anything not to disappoint him."

By 1975, Pitzer had replaced Weld in the "Beefmobiles" and the Pitzer/Weikert team lasted through the end of the decade. Together, from '75 until '80, they claimed wins at Williams Grove, Selinsgrove, an All Start Circuit of Champions show at Findlay, Port Royal, Susky, Lake City (Fla.), Gibsonton (Fla.), Atlanta (Ga.) and Syracuse (N.Y.).

Pitzer also won the 1979 USAC opener at the Reading Fairgrounds over Sheldon Kinser, Larry "Smokey" Snellbaker, Norman "Bubby" Jones and Rich Vogler. Said Bob, "Paul Pitzer was the fiercest competitor who ever drove for me. He knew only one way to drive, and that was with the throttle to the floor. It didn't matter where he was on the track or in what position. Pitz was charging."

If Pitzer couldn't make any shows due to his growing work commitments, Weikert had other hotshoes lined up to drive his cars, including Thad Doshier, Kramer Williamson, Bobby Allen and a young Randy Wolfe, who produced a number of local wins. However, in mid-1980, while Pitzer was running USAC for Bob, Weikert replaced Wolfe with Keith Kauffman and he beat Ted Johnson's World of Outlaws (WoO) at Williams Grove aboard a Ben Cook-chassis number 29 car. Keith, a gentleman who would drive for Weikert on and off over the next decade, was a solid winner in '81 and '82, picking up another WoO win at East Bay and All Star wins at the Sharon and Eldora tracks in Ohio. He also nabbed multiple wins at his home tracks of Williams Grove and Port Royal, and singles at Bridgeport (N.J.) and Penn National's "Toby" Tobias Memorial. Said Kauffman of his outspoken owner, "When his car wins, the people don't leave. Everybody hangs around to hear what Bob has to say."

Later in 1982, a youthful Bobby Davis (Jr.) was hired and he won immediately for Bob at the Grove. In '83, Davis won 26 features, including twice at Williams Grove and once each at Lebanon Valley (N.Y.) and Sarver (Penna.) over the WoO touring regulars. He also won at most of the tracks on the Central Pennsylvania circuit, picking up the Williams Grove and Port Royal track titles. However, near the end of the season, Davis quit the ride to go back to his native Tennessee, so Weikert put George Ferguson in the saddle and he was rewarded with a victory.

After a succession of drivers in early 1984, including Ferguson, two-time winner Jac Haudenschild and Snellbaker, Weikert hired veteran Doug Wolfgang of Sioux Falls (S.D.) to pilot the Weikert Livestock machinery. Said Bob at the time, "I'll tell you, we're gonna get people's attention. I've always liked Doug Wolfgang as a driver and as a person. I'm going to go on record and make a statement that the first time Doug Wolfgang drives my car, he'll win the race."

Naturally, Doug, with mechanics Davey Brown (Jr.) and Davey Brown (Sr.), opened up with a win against Bert Emick's All Stars at Sharon on July 18th and he never looked back. According to Weikert, who was very high on the Brown's too, "These guys are mechanics. They not bolt-on mechanics, who throw parts away because they don't work. The Browns fix them. They're theory mechanics. They know why parts work and can fix them if they don't."

The Wolfgang/Weikert team went to Doug's home track of Knoxville and again won the mid-August Nationals, this time over Steve Kinser, Sammy Swindell, Brad Doty and Jeff Swindell. One year later, they did it again, besting Sammy, Ron Shuman, Jeff and Dave Blaney. The wins paid \$20,000 and \$25,000, respectively. In '84, Wolfgang also won the Port Royal Tuscarora 50 and the Williams Grove National Open. According to Doug, "It didn't take me but one night with him to realize that Bob was going to do whatever we needed him to do, as far as providing me with the right equipment. In my opinion, he gave me the best chance I ever had to do what I love to do, and that's win races."

In '85, Wolfgang was named "Driver of the Year" and Weikert "Owner of the Year" by the National Sprint

(Bob Weikert Bio Continues Below)

Car Poll voting panel after they won the 25th anniversary Knoxville Nationals, Jackson (Minn.) Nationals, Sharon Nationals, Williams Grove National Open and Tuscarora 50. They also won \$50,000 at Earl Baltes' King's Royal at Eldora, and many WoO, ASCoC and non-sanctioned events across the country for a 50-plus win season. The number 29 car's colors were especially appropriate for the '95 national championship winning team. Said Weikert, "I'm proud of my flag. You know why my race cars are red, white and blue, don't you? Because my flag is."

1986 was nearly a repeat, as the super-team won forty—plus many more WoO, All Star and open competition events, including for the third straight year, the Sharon Nationals, Tuscarora 50 and Williams Grove National Open events. And in '87, the team reeled in 30-something more WoO, ASCoC, and true outlaw wins, including their fourth straight Tuscarora 50 at the Juniata County Fairgrounds. Especially satisfying, though, were the WoO wins on Ted Johnson's national tour. Bob once said, "I've beat the Outlaws. You bet I have. I knocked 'em off with Bobby Davis, Jr., when he was 19 years old. I've knocked 'em off with Keith Kauffman, too. And I knocked 'em off—real bad, all over the country—with Doug Wolfgang. Buddy, I've knocked the Outlaws off a bunch of times."

What has been tough for Bob, though, is that he has always found it relaxing to watch his cars race, yet, he has had a full-time successful cattle business at home. The "beef baron" once said, "When you have a business, and you like it to run smooth, you have to keep close to home. We've got an awful lot going on. We run the meat market (up in Gettysburg) and livestock operation during the week and go racing on weekends. We've got the farms. We've got one of the most outstanding cattle businesses in this country. I believe you have to put your business first. But if I could race every day, I would. I love racing and I love people, I'll admit I've spent a lot of money racing, but I'll also tell you it's been

good advertising for me. I've made a lot of good connections through racing."

In the decade since Doug Wolfgang went home in late '87, Bob Weikert has had many of the sport's greatest champions and challengers in his red, white and blue machines. Among the drivers that have had the honor to pilot the famed "Mr. Beef" machines are

Although his last World of Outlaws win came in 1991 with Jeff Swindell, Weikert has continued winning All Star shows and regular events through 1997. And, as a general rule, he has remained good friends with all of his drivers. Said Bob, "Bobby Davis and I were unbeatable until his girlfriend got homesick and they went back to Tennessee. Kenny Weld and I split when he bought into the Lincoln Speedway. Doug Wolfgang and I won Knoxville twice, but he left me because he had a family in South Dakota and wanted to spend more time with them. Paul Pitzer—the hardest chargin' guy who ever drove for me—had to leave me because the company he worked for didn't want him to race anymore. Kenny Jacobs and I won a lot of races, but I had problems with a mechanic and I told Kenny, 'You're a good racer. It's gonna take me some time to get a new mechanic. If you can find a ride, take it.' He left here on good terms."

Despite having respiratory health problems throughout the 1990's, Bob Weikert remains very positive about his life, family, business and racing. Said he, "I'm a very lucky man. You know what I'm awful proud of? Over the years, I've won over 500 races. I've beat some of the best teams that were ever in this sport. My profession is the cattle business, but I beat a lot of people whose profession is sprint car racing. And when you beat a man at his own game, by God, that makes you feel pretty good."

According to historian Kevin Eckert, car owner Bob Weikert has won more than 391 feature events on 46 tracks with 21 drivers in 16 states, including six Williams Grove National Opens, five Tuscarora 50's, four Knoxville Nationals and four straight Sharon Nationals, two Jackson Nationals and one King's Royals. But his most-lasting legacy, in addition to his successes in the cattle industry and the sport of sprint car racing, may just be his untold generosity to family, friends, drivers, mechanics, rival teams, and fans throughout the United States of America.



Kenny Weld and Bob Weikert

Ron Shuman, Kenny Jacobs, Randy Kinser, Rickey Hood, Jimmy Sils, Lee Brewer, Randy Wolfe again, Jeff Swindell, Lance Dewease, Kenny Adams, Dave Blaney, Rocky Lee Hodges, Andy Hillenburg, Dave Calaman, Danny Smith, Kevin "Pup" Huntley, Kauffman again, Terry McCarl, Len Krautheim III, Jeff Shepard, Randy Hannagan, Greg Coverdale, Kevin Frey, Tim Dietz, Jim Nace, Mike Lutz, Judd Shepard, Jeff "Spider" Thomas, Mike Walter and Bill Brian (Jr.).

(NSCHoF Photo)