

Pikes Peak Hill Climb

BY GRIFF BORGESON

Photo by Harper

THE BOYS at the top of Pikes Peak had their winnings counted and divided by the time the last car away took off from the starting line thousands of feet below—because this was also the last car that anyone expected to win. But the little Offy charged full bore and the only thing that kept it from hewing a path into the spectators' parking area was a series of three hairy spins casually elbowed by driver Keith Andrews.

The combination of Andrews and his Joe Hunt Magneto Special had looked promising when they'd qualified ninth in a field of 20 a few days before, but a scant 2½ hours before the race they had become unequivocal underdog. To get his Offy nicely warmed up Andrews had driven it to the starting point from near-by Colorado Springs. But while he was on

the highway a state officer chose to stop him for a nice, long, fatherly chat about where racing cars should and should not be operated. During this interview—which must have been an interesting study in suspense and frustration—a certain amount of clutch slipping took place, and when Andrews finally found himself free to go the clutch was frozen tight. The Hunt crew got the car to the starting point and opened it up to have a look.

Naturally, this took time; it meant half-stripping the machine. But when they pulled the clutch apart they found that the plates were in good shape—the hub splines were merely galled. Hunt and mechanic Dan Kuella, working against the clock, settled down to the excruciatingly painstaking job of restoring the metal's finish with hand files and crocus cloth.

At last the damage was corrected and the car feverishly reassembled. Andrews climbed in, ready to roll to the starting line. But again the car wouldn't go. Hunt, calm when a lesser man would start screaming for the men in white coats to come take him away, quickly analyzed the symptoms, made the snap decision that in the excitement two transmission gears had become engaged at once, snatched the lid from the gearbox, found he'd guessed right, pried the offending gear free, replaced the cover and got the car to the starting line barely in time to be the last away. Andrews roared off, spun in the first of the course's 146 hair-pins, went down the hill far enough to turn around, headed up again and went over the top the winner, having chopped 35.7 seconds from the record set last year by Louis Unser.

Andrews, second-place Thomas and third-place Finney are all residents of Colorado Springs and, like famous past winners Unser and Rogers, enjoy the advantage of living in the shade of the Peak. However, Andrews is no specialist in hill-climbing. He is an all-around racing man with the reputation of being one of the hottest midjet drivers in the Rocky Mountain area, where he has done well for the colors of the Kenz-Leslie stable.

In this era of specialized racing Pikes Peak provides refreshing novelty. Tires furnish an interesting example. The top three cars all used Firestones but Andrews chose Grooved Ascots, Thomas liked the Town and Country tread pattern, and Finney decided that passenger car DeLuxe Champions were good enough for him. Unser, who had the bad luck to spin out badly and finish last, was trying out another make of tire.

To give you an idea of the sort of time a stock car can make over this course which climbs 4,708 feet in 12.42 miles, Lloyd Faddis, president of the hill climb association, set a new stock car record with the Dodge pace car of 20m28.9s. Last year he covered the same course in another pace car in 23m21.2s.

The Pikes Peak climb is one of the world's great speed contests. It is AAA-sanctioned, contributes 200 national championship points to the winner and pays him about \$280 per mile, not counting manufacturers' prize money, making it, in the mileage sense, probably the best paying event in the world. The setting is a natural paradise, the hospitality of the local people is boundless and the organization is above criticism. A record crowd of well over 14,000 people journeyed to see the climb this year. ●

PIKES PEAK HILL CLIMB OFFICIAL RESULTS

Distance: 12.42 miles. Altitude at start: 7,415 feet. Altitude at finish: 14,110 feet.

Driver	Car	Time
Keith Andrews	Joe Hunt Magneto Special	14m39.7s
Hugh Thomas	Bandimere Special	14m48.5s
Bob Finney	Bob Frenzel Cars Special	14m54.0s

Motorcycle

Bill Meyer	H-D	15m34.2s
Bill McConnell Jr.	H-D	16m00.9s
Melvin Flint	Triumph	16m16.5s

