

THEIR FASTEST YEAR:

...even roadsters turned 200 regularly, and anything less than 130 was slow.



Bill Scace's Porsche RS was driven to the salt from Chicago by Bob Hirsch. ABOVE: SCI's John Christy gets word from starter Bob Higbee before qualifying run of 130.6. Hirsch took two-way record, 135.772 and Scace, one-way run at 140.6.

SCI Staff Report

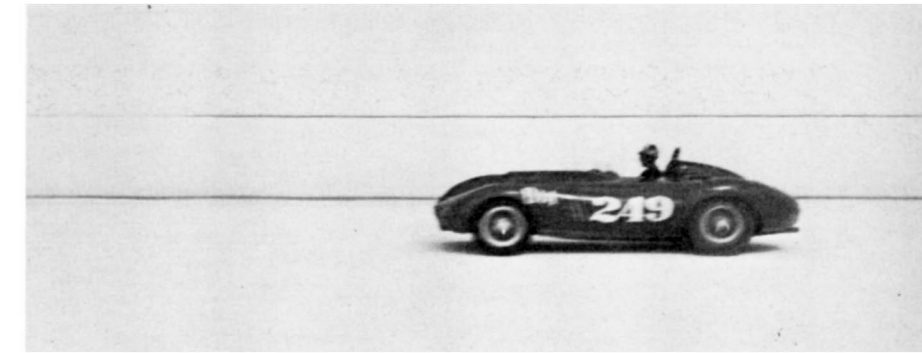
THE adventures and exploits that enrich seven solid days each year during the Bonneville National Speed Trials seem to be largely the effects of a single cause. That cause is the unique spirit you find among this group of enthusiasts. It is not sentimentality but mere straight reporting when we say that this spirit includes genuineness, ingenuity, diligence, a wry form of off-beat humor, straightforwardness, human warmth, cooperation and spontaneous, unselfconscious sportsmanship. There's a spirit of grappling with "impossible" challenges and there's a spirit of wholesome, humorous outrageousness that prompts people to go 200 mph in a Model T roadster or to name a car to be proud of the "Nothing Special." By the end of the week a large number of the cars running are doing so with pistons or clutches or some vital part that has been loaned by a fellow competitor, often in the same competing class. It's impossible to put this utopian spirit into precise words but

a great many people sense it and comment on it. It's the best thing about Bonneville. The machines and speeds are its worthy by-products.

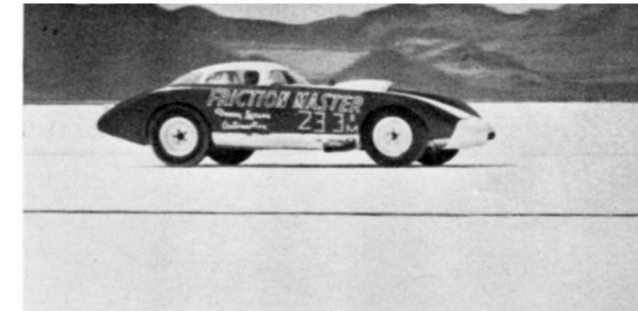
This year's meet was marked by one of the biggest turn-outs in several years. Entries totalled about 200, of which about 30 were in the sports car category, and the spectating crowd was tremendous. The variety of equipment was unusually rich and new records were set in 19 classes.

The soggy weather that had kept the desert flora blooming and had almost thoroughly sabotaged the just-completed BMC record runs threatened to ruin the Bonneville Nationals. A good 70 cars lined up for tech inspection across from the Western and Wendover Motels the day before the meet was to begin. They were processed in blazing sunshine and then, as dusk fell, a cloudburst struck and soaked the salt. It could have been worse, because the salt was at least useable the next day and became progressively drier through-

Bob Drake barrels Frank Arciero's 4.9 Ferrari through the traps for a short-lived record of 176.913. While qualifying the best he could get was 170 until the hood blew off, at which point he picked up an additional five miles an hour. Reason was that pressure under hood from grille created vacuum at carb pickup.



Drake's record fell to Barnes-Larsen-Dauphin car which turned 178.068 av. with 390-inch Chrysler.



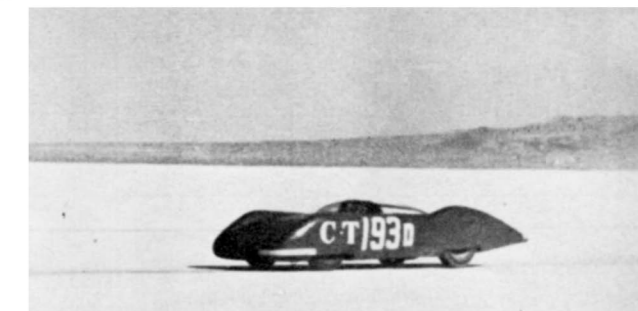
Stanford Bros. Porsche 1600 took Class A; 107.932.



Chrysler-powered E&D Special set C-M record; 138.31.



Former Shadoff Spl. made new SCTA record; 248.281.



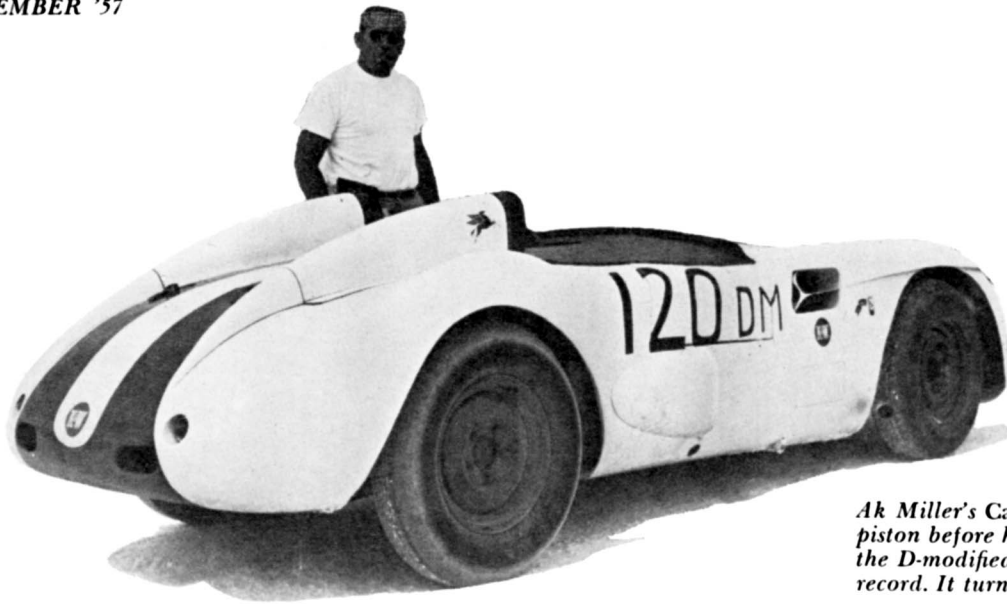
out the week. So the cars went, not as fast as they would have on a bone-dry surface, but still at speeds that set new highs, often by whopping margins.

The first entry to arrive at Wendover was the famous Shadoff Special streamliner, holder of the FIA International Class C record at 236.36 mph. This year's target was the FIA Class B record of 268.9 set in 1938 by Caracciola in a Mercedes, and owner-builder Malcolm Hooper had installed a 467 cu. in. injected Chrysler to do the job. He had also sold the car to sportsman Fred Lavell of Birmingham, Mich., and the plan was to run immediately after Moss' MG, while USAC-FIA timing facilities were available. The weather that delayed the MG runs to the eleventh hour also blasted these hopes. But it did give Moss and Syd Enever (MG's chief engineer and himself a product of the practical school) an opportunity to meet some native practical engineers and examine their handiwork.

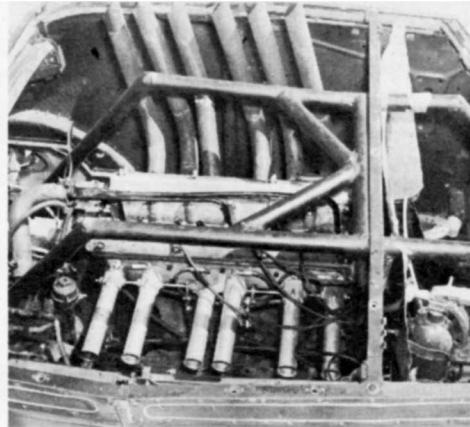
Their reactions were interesting. Both Britains were fascinated by the machine, frankly admired the excellence of its design and workmanship and the rapport between them and the Hooper crew was what you would expect, given mutual interests and mutual respect. Enever pointed out with some surprise that the four-year-old car's chassis layout was strikingly similar to that of his newest MG record car. Assured that all our one-off machines are not so advanced, Enever replied, "Don't worry. When they start going fast enough the others will get advanced too. They'll have to."

Hooper delivered his car to its new owner and headed back to the coast, leaving matters of mechanical preparation in the hands of Don Clark of C-T Automotive, builders of the streamliner's big new engine. But before Lavell had a chance to guide his new possession down the course, urgent business pulled him east, Clark, finding himself all tuned up with no place to go, decided to go ahead and drive the car in the Nationals although he had never tooled anything remotely as fast. He very calmly made a qualifying run of 250.87, then turned an official two-way 248.281 — almost 32 mph faster than the existing SCTA D Streamliner record. The car would have gone much faster but it was beginning to behave squirrely at this speed, apparently because an inch and a half toe-in developed in the de Dion-sprung rear wheels. America's fastest single-engine car will be one to watch next year.

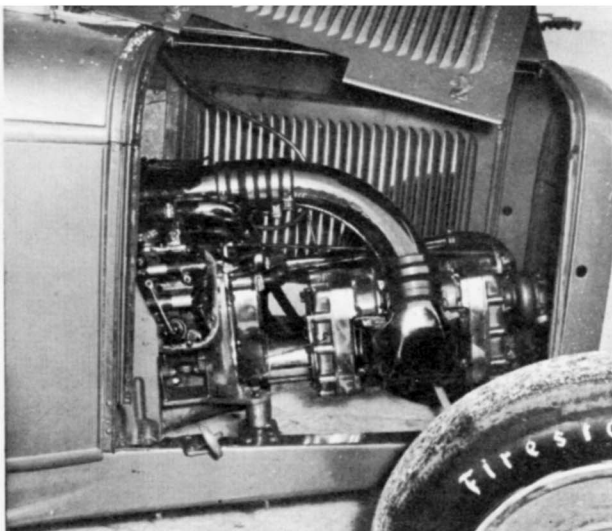
The fastest of them all continues to be the Kenz-Leslie streamliner, out of Denver, and powered by a trio of 304 cu. in. Edelbrock-equipped flathead Fords. The highest speed ever clocked by a U.S.-built car until this year was set by Willie Young in this machine in 1953, at a two-way average of 255.411 mph. Since then Roy Leslie has manned the controls, but mechanical failures have consistently kept him from making a two-way run at new-record speed or even at a speed that would qualify him for membership in the 200 MPH Club, although he's topped 200 one-way many, many times. But this year Bill Kenz outdid himself in pre-



Ak Miller's Caballo blew a piston before he could attack the D-modified Sports Car record. It turned 177.42.



Coventry would probably look on this with mixed emotions. Veteran competition coupe took class A record at 125.596 with Jaguar engine using five pistons to bring displacement under 183 inches. #6 cylinder was blanked off but piston remained.



GMC-blown DeSoto V-8-powered stock-bodied '32 Ford, owned by Sughrue, Edwards, Smith made 191.55 D-Rdstr record. Best one-way time of "Highboy": 195-plus!

paring the machine that his childhood friend and long-time business partner would drive. It ran daily with the regularity of an express train, turned a top of 270.473 mph and set a new all-time high SCTA record of 266.204. This big car is immaculate in every detail and Leslie reports it's solid, steady and vibrationless when going flat out. But Kenz feels that he's squeezed the ultimate in urge from the flatheads. We'll see what he returns with in '58.

Sports car classes at the Nationals approach the FIA classes more closely each year. This year they were:

- O Productionunder 91 cu. in.
- A Production92 to 170 cu in.
- B Production 171 to 305 cu. in.
- C U.S. Production..under 371 cu. in.
- OM Modifiedunder 91 cu. in.
- AM Modified92 to 183 cu. in.
- BM Modified 184 to 305 cu in.
- CM ModifiedU.S. sports cars with 368 to 425 cu. in.
- DM Modified306 to 488 cu. in.



LEFT, TOP: Simpson's modified C-Jag ran like a watch, turning 155.97. LEFT, BOTTOM: Dees' 220S started out in high 90's, later turned 103.92. BELOW: Hirsch and crew member try to rectify fuel problem that kept Scace's 300SL under 140.



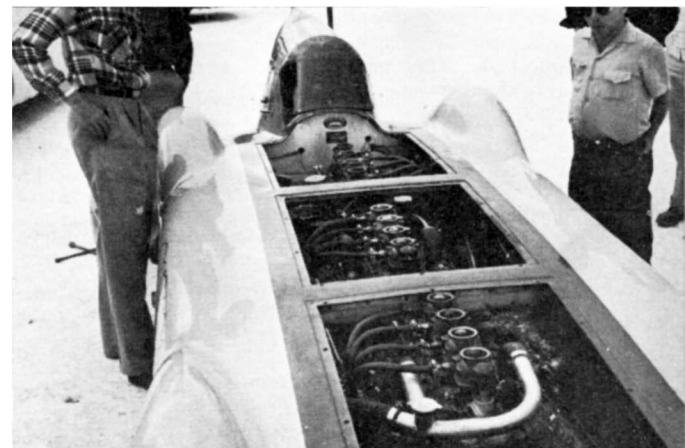
The fastest sports car of all, the fastest ever to run on the salt on pump gas, proved to be the Barnes-Larsen-Dauphin Sorrel-bodied, Allard-based, Chrysler-engined, gull-wing door coupe. Two injected engines were run: a 303 cu. in. for BM Class and a 390 cu. in. for DM. The best speed with the smaller engine was 167.83 mph, which was not fast enough for the competition. But with the big mill the streamlined coupe hurtled through the traps at 183.76 and set the DM record at 178.068, a healthy improvement over this car's '56 record of 164.312.

The BM record was carried off by a surprise post-entry, popular road-racing pilot Bob Drake in Frank Arciero's ex-Paravano 4.9 liter, 299 cu. in. Ferrari two-seater. Drake was on the salt the first morning of the meet, red-eyed from an all-night haul up from Los Angeles. The screaming exhaust note of the purebred V12 was an exciting contrast to the throaty bellow of brawny Detroit V8's as Drake made several runs in the high 160's but could coax the revs no higher. Then, in the middle of a flat-out run the car's hood blew off — with no injury to the startled driver — and on his next run Drake added five mph to his speed! He pulled out in mid-week in time to show for technical inspection at Santa Barbara. When all the returns were in he held the BM sports car record at 176.913.

AK Miller, naturally, was on hand, fresh from a post-Monza and Mille Miglia tour of Europe, to contend in DM class with his rapid but so far not entirely reliable *Caballo de Hierro*. Miller proved that his 395 cu. in. injected Chrysler special could move with the best by turning a one-way top of 177.42 . . . and then he blew, leaving Denny Larsen in undisputed command of the entire sports car category. When comparing the speeds of the Larsen, Arciero and Miller cars it's important not to overlook the significance of open cockpit versus aerodynamic coupe bodies

A promising performer that merits more than passing

BELOW: The fastest U.S.-built car ever run was the Kenz-Leslie Streamliner, built by Bill Kenz, driven by Roy Leslie. Powered by three flat-head Fords, the car turned 270.473 one way; 266.204 average.



Bonneville Nationals

mention is the brand new special entered by John Teverbaugh of Concord Calif., another veteran of the salt. This car's gleaming plastic body is a blend of the best lines of D Jag and big Ferraris and Maseratis. Under the hood is a particularly sanitary installation of a 368 cu. in. Mercury with a mighty GMC blower coupled directly to the front of the crank. Among the car's carefully-engineered features is a professionally-designed braking parachute built into its tail. It was a severe disappointment that Teverbaugh's machine cooked up after a warmup run of only 135. It's good for at least another 35 mph and should do it next year.

Actually it's remarkable that out of so many cars that are so highly stressed, so few have serious mechanical trouble. Among the few obvious goers that also encountered disappointment from the start were the fine streamliners of John Herda and Chet Herbert. They could not be de-bugged in time. Although months and even years were invested in their preparation, cars capable of big speeds present unique problems. Consider just this one: where do you go to perform shakedown tests with a car capable of, let's say, 300 mph? The Herbert car, certainly, with its slippery shape and two 355 cu. in. Chryslers is going to go fast when it does crank on.

Descending to less hair-raising levels of speed, the next-fastest sports job was the C Jag of Joe Simpson of Stockton, Calif., breathing through a trio of dual-throat Webers. Simpson got his entry-fee's worth of rides, clocked a best 155.97. He was running in B Modified, but hot on his heels was the B Production Mercedes-Benz 300SL of Albert Schmidt of Cincinnati. No stripling, Schmidt nevertheless dominates his car like a bronc-buster on a mustang, charged 154.90 one way and set his class record at 150.67. The rapid stockbroker picked up the nickname of *Herr Doktor Ingenieur*.

Schmidt trailered his sports car from the east, but many were driven in. Ed Fusch of St. Louis drove his '54 Corvette with 365 cu. in. Chrysler, '41 Cad trans and 3.07 Olds rear end belowdecks. He wheeled directly off the highway, onto the salt, and steamed through the traps at 134. A plug change and he stepped up to 142. He pulled the dual four-throat carbs, installed Hilborn injectors (no ram tubes), clocked 148.02 . . . and drove home.

Much-closer-to-stock Corvettes turned imposing times. George Hanson's Ak Miller-equipped 340 cu. in. coupe made 144.00 one way, then set the C Production record at 144.322. Stanley Nelson's super-tuned, stock-injected coupe did 143.08 and George Hill showed what can be expected of a strictly-stock carbureted 283 by purring past the timer's stand with full mufflers at 127.29.

Duffy and Fish drove down from the State of Washington in what proved to be

the hottest T-bird, which they tuned until they got 136.98. But the most fabulous performance by a Ford was staged by the '56 stock-bodied Victoria of Carrol Miller of Houston. Only the tuned-length exhaust stacks protruding from neat holes in the front fenders suggested that the dual four-throat 302 cu. in. engine had been given some special attention. But this Texas boy had missed nothing. His closest competition in the hotly-contested C Coupe/Sedan Class turned 133.72. Miller screamed through at 149 on his first run . . . on pump gas . . . and set the two-way record at 150.097!

A hard-worked car that fascinated everyone was Bill Scace's Porsche 550 RS Spyder. Scace drove his 300SL out from Chicago and Bob Hirsch drove the Spyder, which was equipped with a Speedster windshield, muffler, and home-made top for the trek. This was probably the only car on the salt whose high-pitched, whining exhaust note could be heard the full length of the course. SCI Editor John Christy took the dohc pusher through the clocks at 131 but the salt was greasy and a big divergence between tach and time proved slippage. The rear swing axles were cinched down to give zero camber and larger patches of tire contact. That helped, and as the salt dried Hirsch began turning in the middle 130's. Finally, Scace was inspired to invest in sacks of flour totalling 80 lbs. With these as rear-end ballast and by tuning tire pressure the optimum was found at 40 lbs. flour and 30 psi in the skins. Hirsch ripped off the O Modified Class record at 135.772 and Scace himself — twisting it perhaps as only an owner feels free to do — cut himself a roaring one-way run at 140.62 mph.

Among the small foreign entries no one had more sport than the Stanford brothers from Los Angeles, with their hard-working Porsche 1600 coupe. The car ran steadily, day after day, gradually improving its 107 mph speed by a few hundredths, finally setting the A Production record at 107.932. Said the brothers, "We come here every year. We used to build our own cars and spend the whole week hard at work. This year we're going steadily and the car just runs like a watch." Mark Dees, a law student from Stanford University, also ran constantly in a Mercedes-Benz 220S sedan he had just brought over from Europe. He began by turning in the high 90's. Merely removing the car's fan gave him a satisfying 103.92!

Umbilically bound to the sports car contingent was a class winner that will be hailed in Coventry with mixed emotions. Externally, this was just another Model T Ford Coupe, chopped almost to the cowl, wearing a wind-splitting needle nose, and painted freight-train red. But tucked in the back of the cab was a ported, polished, tuned and groomed Jaguar engine. This discovery came as a bit of a jolt, but the capper was the fact that, to compete in their chosen class — A Competition Coupes — owners Dot and Bill Milliken found themselves with too many inches. So they merely pulled #6 piston and rod and bolted a counterweight to the crank throw, coming up with a displacement of 178 cu. in., which put them in the class normally dominated by four-bangers. The rec-

ord had been 116 but, burning pump gas, the Milliken T-bone Jag registered a top time of 127.11 and set a new class record of 125.596. The six exhaust stacks are still there because the car runs on all barrels at dry lakes meets.

Coventry's invasion does not necessarily mean that the day of Dearborn's four-bangers is done. Ford-four fans continue to be as fervently dedicated as *Bugattisti* and John Vesco stands as leading defender of their cause. His entry was one of the most interesting, exciting, original, beautiful and rebellious cars on the salt this year.

It's a canary-yellow and white streamliner. It's lean as an arrow and has only five sq ft of frontal area, including the wheels. It's 30 ins high, 18 ft long, weighs 1275 lbs wet and is powered by an injected 183 cu. in. four-port Riley Ford that will wind to about 6000 rpm. It's a jewel of workmanship and efficient packaging, right down to its rear end which harbors the world's narrowest swing axle. The body shell is flawless: Vesco hammered it out of aluminum sheet over an iron oxygen bottle. But we all were worried by the narrow track and the possibility of the car getting sideways.

As it worked out, the engine was cranky and never hit properly on all four. But at a top speed of 166.66 mph, co-designer and driver Jim Dinkins reported that the car tracked true as an arrow, and he drove through fairly harsh side-gusts without feeling them. This definitely is a machine to watch next year. How fast it may go is anyone's guess.

Side winds are the greatest danger at high speed on the salt and when they hit a car the driver needs all the favorable odds he can get. The odds were kind this year. The first day of the meet Culbert's D Modified Roadster clocked a blazing 208.33! Then he went through even faster . . . and flipped. The car went over and over, tires blew, mag wheels shattered; all was wrecked but the car's frame and roll bar. Culbert miraculously emerged from this only slightly bruised and was discussing his experience with the boys in town that night! Fred Larsen had a similar adventure in a similar car, came out of it with the same good fortune. These are incredible experiences and their outcomes are tributes to the SCTA's soundly-based safety regulations and to the value of adequate roll bars, safety harness and protective headgear in particular.

This year the 200 MPH Club welcomed ten new members: Roy Leslie 266.204, Don Clark 248.281, Stirling Moss 245.64, Phil Hill 235, Robert Brissette 229.666, Howard Eichenhofer 209, Ted Fry 206, Gary Cagle 204.547, Bill Crossley 204, and Lloyd Scott 202.999. At the club's annual banquet given at Wendover's State Line Hotel, Leslie was elected president of the 35-man group for the coming year.

Next year will mark the tenth anniversary of the Bonneville National Speed Trials. The sports-car entry list is larger each year, and '58's promises to be the best yet. We'd like to see you on the salt and we'll publish the new regulations as soon as they are made official.

Griff Borgeson