

by Don Francisco

**T**HE 1965 BONNEVILLE season got off to a miserable start on August 22 when the Bonneville Nationals were scheduled to begin, and as of September 29, the condition hadn't changed. While some areas of the U.S. were having serious drought problems, the salt flats had too much water.

On September 5, Bob Summers drove a 1966 Plymouth Satellite equipped with a street "426-hemi" V-8 to a new Class B Closed Car flying-mile record of 156.35 mph. The old record was 153.67 mph, set in 1962 by a Pontiac.

Of the 3 World's Land Speed Record cars that ran, 2 were new and the other was Defending Champion Art Arfons' jet-propelled Green Monster that currently holds the record at 536.71 mph. One of the new cars was the Summers Brothers' 4-engined streamliner, which had drive-line and gearshift linkage problems that had to be corrected before it could be driven at high speed. The time it took to make these corrections, plus the delays due to bad weather, limited the car's runs to a disappointing total of 4. Speeds were 218, 244, 259, and 367 mph for the mile.

The other new car was Walt Arfons' very different and nerve-shattering rocket car, driven by Bob Tatroe. Powered by 15 1000-pound-thrust Aerojet rockets clustered in its tail, this huge, dart-shaped beast gave the impression of having landed on the salt after a trip from outer space. On the 15-rocket run, all rockets were fired at once. The sight and sounds created by the rockets were enough to rattle the nerves of even the most experienced Bonneville observer.

# BONNEVILLE '65

Although the rocket car's runs were spectacular, the rocket's 15-second burning duration wasn't long enough to accelerate it to the expected speed of 750 mph nor to let it maintain, through the mile-long timing trap, the top speed it did hit. On the 15-rocket run, after accelerating one kilometer (approximately  $\frac{5}{8}$ -mile) the car's unofficial average speed over a distance of 2000 feet was 406 mph. Walt's now adding 8 more rockets to the car to boost his speed potential.

Art Arfons didn't plan to try for a new Land Speed Record at this time. He'll wait to see what Craig Breedlove and Walt do. Then, if necessary, he'll come back and go for broke. But Art did make 3 standing-start, quarter-mile acceleration runs, each exceeding the existing record of 210 mph for this distance. Speeds were 237, 249, and 258.62 mph, the last one a new record. These runs were sanctioned and timed by the American Hot Rod Association.

And that, quick and dirty, is the story of Bonneville '65 to September 29. Next in view is Craig Breedlove and his new car, then Walt Arfons again, and, if necessary, Art Arfons. The Summers Brothers may also be back this year. /MT

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR



Bob Tatroe shattered nerves but no records in Walt Arfons' 15-rocket streamliner. Walt will add 8 rockets, then try again.



Bob Summers kicked off Bonneville season by smashing Pontiac's closed-car record with a hemi-engined '66 Belvedere Satellite.



Summers Brothers tried to break wheel-driven record with their 4-Chryslered, double-gearboxed, 4wd cigar. Poor salt condi-

tions and mechanical ills gave a speed of only some 360 mph on their initial runs. The transmissions use special Hurst shifters.