

**R**ANDLEMAN, N. C. is so small its telephone switchboard is in High Point—no metropolis either. Randleman is a long way from the stench of tortured rubber, roaring engines, dusty infields, broken fence and checkered flags. Randleman is a long way from Daytona, Atlanta, Charlotte and Darlington. Randleman is where Richard Petty lives.

Off the main highway a secondary road leads to a still smaller road that proceeds to a general store and gas station with the everpresent Coca-Cola sign in front. From there, a dusty, bumpy little cowpath winds its way to the Petty spread—30–40 acres of shade trees, green grass and rich

brown earth. Three large houses, one for the senior Pettys, one for Richard and his family, and one for brother Maurice and family, are clustered together. One incongruous building, a small office and garage, where the Petty-Plymouth stock car business is conducted, completes this otherwise bucolic scene.

When we missed the Pettys, as everyone did, at the big NASCAR Grand National races last year, we took a side trip to their quiet place to see if they were missing the big races and all that goes with them. They were. When Chrysler introduced its "King Kong" hemi-head engine in 1964, it dominated the NASCAR season, helped Richard

to the individual driving title and Papa Lee to the owners' title. When NASCAR outlawed King Kong, Chrysler withdrew its Plymouths and other cars and its drivers, Richard, David Pearson, Jim Paschal and others, from the competitive circuit. Ford was the only major manufacturer remaining and it had things its own way.

"I'm a little disgusted," Richard admitted. "Here I am, 27 years old, and I'm sittin' around. I'm as good as I'll ever be and I'll stay this way three or four years at least and I'm wastin' time. I won near a hundred grand last year and I think I could be winnin' close to the same this year. I was the champion last year, so I'd be gettin' money just

to show up this year. I'm not really sittin' around and I'm not really losin' money. I'm givin' drag racin' exhibitions and I'm makin' a lot of money for it, but if I was making more money, I'd still want to get back to racin', 'cause I'm not a drag racer, I'm a race car driver. Besides, the only thing I ever really hated in racin' was killin' that boy."

Dragging his electric-blue Plymouth Barracuda before 12,000 fans at a small dragstrip in Dallas, Ga., last April, a tie rod on his car broke, a wheel hurtled off and into the crowd, the car swerved into a ditch alongside the track, careened up an embankment, then became airborne, arced over a

wire fence and crashed into a knot of spectators. An 8-year-old boy was killed, and seven or eight other people were injured. Richard Petty escaped serious injury but was shaken up and sobbing and suffering shock. "The heck with me. Get to those people I hit," he moaned to ambulance attendants. Later, Chrysler and the Pettys were targeted by \$1,500,000 in damage suits brought by various persons who claimed to have been injured in the accident.

While a new Barracuda was being prepared for forthcoming drag races, Petty sat outside in the sun and talked about the mishap. "I don't know what's going to happen," he admitted. "I feel

strongly that we were not to blame, but the courts will decide that, I guess. I know that you expect people to get killed in auto racing sometimes. You don't like it, but you expect it. And I suppose spectators take a certain risk any time they go to a track. But you don't expect little boys, you don't expect any spectators to get killed or injured. You can take it when a driver gets killed. It's the risk we all take. Even if I'm in an accident in which a driver gets killed—well, that's part of racing. But this was different."

He squinted at the sky, handsome, curly-haired, boyish, normally relaxed, but now seeming older, strained and tense. "It's a funny thing about rac-

# RICHARD PETTY COMEBACK COUNTRY BOY

## *Outlaw King Kong And Tragic Death Marred a Promising NASCAR Career*

BY BILL LIBBY



NASCAR CHAMPION in 1964, then outlawed, Petty and the legalized Hemi are on their way back.



# PETTY *"I didn't win much for a while."*

ing, but sometimes you have to have bad things to have things made better. Because of the suit and the legal angles, I can't say anything about this particular track right now, but I know that some of the dragstrips down South where the sport is just taking hold are not as well set up as those back East and I think something like this will cause them to take a lot of precautions to protect the drivers and the fans. When Jimmy Pardue got killed testing tires at Charlotte last September, he blew a tire, busted through a guardrail and went down the bank. When NASCAR re-built the guardrail, it was strengthened. Next race, I hit it in exactly the same spot as Jimmy, but it held, I bounced off and wasn't killed."

He looked down at his big, strong hands. "I don't mind draggin', but I'll be glad when this thing is settled, one way or the other. I've had offers and I could drive some pretty good cars for some pretty good people and I don't guess Chrysler could be too upset with me if I did, but we've a contract with them, they've been good to us, and we've been good to them, too, so far as that goes, and I guess we owe each other some loyalty, so I'm stickin' with 'em, at least until I'm sure they're not coming back into racing. I think they will.

"Factories been jumpin' in and jumpin' out of racin' for a long time now. I think racin' needs the factories. I know they make it tough on the little fellows, but the Pettys didn't start out

big and we found a way to work with 'em. They have the money you need to develop good, safe cars and fast, safe racing and big crowds and big payoffs. One thing, though, I think they should all be in or all be out. It's no good Ford havin' it all to itself. People like to see different kinds of cars competin', too. Why did they run us out? 'Cause we're too powerful? Let the others get powerful enough to keep up with us. For a lot of years, they were more powerful than we were, you know. Anyway, I hope we get back in."

**I**N JUNE, 1965, NASCAR revised its rules to permit the 427-cu. in. Chrysler hemi-head engine to be used in the big cars on the big tracks and the small cars on the small tracks. There are a few restrictions on the Hemi, but none that prevented Chrysler from moving its drivers and cars back into the fray. Ford was too far in front to be caught. Ford was driven to the driving title for the first time as Ned Jarrett won the championship. Junior Johnson won the most races, driving Fords. Fred Lorenzen and A. J. Foyt, Dick Hutcherson and others won big races in Fords. Fords now have won over 50 races more than their nearest competitors, Chevrolets, through the NASCAR years. Holman and Moody, the No. 1 racing operation for Ford, had things locked up. Chrysler wasn't prepared to jump right back in and take over. But, at least, it was back in.

In the last half of the season, Richard Petty encountered a great deal of

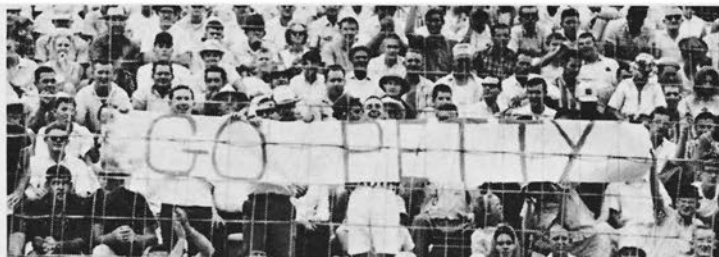
mechanical trouble and scored a great many near misses, but he also showed the boys how a few times. In his second time out, Richard and his familiar No. 43 Plymouth broke the Nashville Fairgrounds Speedway qualifying record with an 82.1 mph trial run, then led most of the way, survived a hectic duel with Junior Johnson and won the 400-lap run on the half-mile Tennessee track at an average of 72.3 mph.

When it was over, Petty struggled out of his car and said, "I'm worn out. That's the first time I've run that far in a long time. I'm about to give out." He then went to his truck and stretched out on the front seat, a cool rag on his forehead. "All that racing's worth it, just to get to lie down like this," he said as a crowd gathered around him. When a youngster asked why he didn't get to kiss the pretty Miss Speedway who was left with only the trophy in her shapely arms, Richard chuckled and said, "I figured if I couldn't do it right, I'd rather not do it at all."

Later, Richard outdistanced Ned Jarrett by two laps, after Johnson crashed and David Pearson broke down, to win the North Carolina 500 Sweepstakes at Asheville-Weaverville's half-mile paved Speedway. Earlier he had broken NASCAR's half-mile qualifying record with an 86.4 mph sprint. Clearly, he was back. And, as the boys converged on Daytona for the real kickoff of the 1966 NASCAR season, the first major race of the new season, and probably the biggest race of the entire season, The Daytona 500, Richard Petty, the 1964 winner, may well be the man to beat, as much or more than 1965 winner Lorenzen, new-champion Jarrett, old star Johnson or any of the others.

The 1964 race is not so far in the past as to be forgotten. "I don't think

LEE PETTY, Richard's Dad, left, before his retirement was popular with stocker fans.



A BADLY bent Buick was all champion-to-be Lee Petty was able to take home from the first NASCAR Grand National at Charlotte, N.C., in 1949.



RICHARD TAKES command on his way to victory at Daytona in 1964.



CLIFFORD MORRISON. DON HUNTER. CHRYSLER PHOTOGRAPHIC

I've ever gone into a race feeling more confident about winning," he said, as he was strapped into his big car behind his King Kong engine. He then led for 375 miles and sizzled to victory at 153.4 mph by a full lap ahead of Jim Pardue and three laps ahead of Paul Goldsmith as Plymouths swept the first three places. Last year, with the Plymouths and Pettys absent, it was a different story. Fred Lorenzen, who is a hard man to beat under any circumstances, sped to victory in his Ford at 141.5 mph by a lap over Darel Dieringer in an accident-marred, rain-abbreviated 332-mile event.

**T**HIS YEAR, as the vastly-publicized, hugely-attended series of races at the Daytona Beach, Fla., International Speedway's super-fast 2.5-mile high-banked track takes over the world auto racing spotlight, the Petty family, the most successful family in auto racing history, is where it belongs, in the center ring. Theirs is a remarkable story.

Lee Petty, lean, hard, close-mouthed, cigar-chewing, recalls how it started. "We had a garage. We built a lot of hot rods and specialized in tune-ups. I used to bang up cars on the back roads, but I'd never driven in a race. They had a race in Greensboro one day, and I'd had it in my mind I'd try a race one of those days, so that day I said I thought I'd give 'er a go. My brother said, 'You wanna try, then?' and I said 'Why not?' So I did. I was 35 years old."

Life begins at 35, of course.

Lee flipped a Buick in the first NASCAR race in 1947. He drove in the first Daytona race. He is a patient man who does not discourage easily. He beat out Johnny Beauchamp to win the Daytona classic in a wild race in which the lead changed hands a total of 35 times.

From then on, he was always near the driving title. In 1950 he was third, 1951 fourth, 1952 third, 1953 second and in 1954, at the age of 40, Lee won his first Grand National Championship, driving a Chrysler on the circuit. He was third in 1955, fourth in 1956 and again in 1957, then in 1958 he drove an Olds to his second crown and in 1959, driving Oldsmobiles and Plymouths, he repeated with his third crown. Herb Thomas won two, in 1951 and 1953; Buck Baker two, in 1956 and 1957; Joe Weatherly two, in 1962 and 1963; and Ned Jarrett two, in 1961 and last year. No driver other than Lee Petty ever has won three Grand National titles.

At Charlotte, in 1959, in his last championship year, Junior Johnson was taking up a lot of the track holding Lee back, so Lee bumped the fender of Junior's car. The fender bent, cut the tire and blew it, causing Junior to spin out into a guardrail. Junior got into the pits, grabbed a pop bottle, changed tires, got out on the track, chased Lee and ran him into the infield. The drivers scrambled from their cars and charged each other. Before it was over, the Charlotte chief of police was forced to go into the infield to arrest Junior for assault with a dangerous weapon. Junior and Lee, neither of them exactly kids, had gone at it hammer and tongs.

"I don't see anything surprising about me having been a good driver at 40 and more," Lee says. "You may not have the young body, but you have experience. Driving is more mental than physical." It took a physical injury to drive him out of racing, however. In 1960, Lee finished sixth. In 1961, John Beauchamp spun him through a fence. Lee's left kneecap was torn off, some ribs were broken and it was six months

before he got out of the hospital. His knee was never the same again and Lee, three times champion, twice runner-up and three times third, retired.

Meanwhile, Richard, born July 2, 1937, was growing up. At Randleman High School, he was an all-conference guard in football and was, at 6 ft., 2 in., a good basketball player. "There was always racing," Richard says. "I grew up around it with Dad racing and working on cars in the garage. I didn't plan it and Dad didn't push me into it.

"One night when I was 21 they were having a hardtop race in Nashville and a convertible race in Columbia at the same time and we didn't have enough drivers to go around. I told Dad, 'I doubt if I can make it, but I'd like to try it.' And he said, 'Well, we have a few old cars lying around, so we'll fix that one over there and give you a try.' He fixed it up and he went to one race and I went to the other. He didn't even see me run my first race. Anyway, I didn't win. I didn't win much for a while.

"In 1958 and 1959 I must have torn up about twenty or thirty thousand dollars of Dad's racing equipment, but he never said anything to me about wrecking cars. Most of it was my fault, too. And if it had been anybody else I'd been driving for, I guess I'd of been shot out of the saddle and wouldn't of been able to get a ride. But I was learning all the while and Dad carried me, and in 1960 I won about \$35,000, which came close to getting Dad even, and he's been showing a pretty good profit on me ever since."

**I**F LEE PAVED the way for his son as an owner, he did not as a driver. Early in his career, Richard was lead-

**FAST FUELING** and a quick tire change on Richard's car at Darlington demonstrates the precision with which Petty cars have been built, maintained, race serviced and driven by father and son, Lee and Richard, since Lee's first race in 1947.





# PETTY "I've thought about driving Indy."

ing Lee in a race at Atlanta and when the starter gave Richard the checkered flag, the youngster passed up the usual insurance lap to coast into the pits. Lee went around another lap, charged into the pits and challenged the scorer, claiming the checker had been thrown a lap early. When the scorecards were checked, his contention was upheld, he was declared the winner and the trophy was taken from his son and given to him.

When people criticized his action, Lee snorted, "I don't reckon I regret it. When he wins, he can have the trophy. But he's not gonna' have it given to him." Richard and Lee duelled many times. Pop never gave away a thing, but his son was soon taking the trophies from him. Looking back on it, Richard grins and says, "If I got in his way, Pop would as soon knock me off the track as he would his worst enemy, but he taught me you can't play favorites, you have to earn everything you get in this business and he was right. They were hard lessons, but good ones."

In 1960, Richard vaulted into second in championship standings, behind Rex White, but well ahead of Lee. In 1961, he slipped to eighth, but in 1962 and 1963 regained the runner-up position behind Joe Weatherly. In that 1963 season, Richard recorded his personal high of 14 victories. The high is 18, tallied by Tim Flock. Richard beat out Ned Jarrett and finally won the crown in 1964. This was exactly 10 years after his father had won it before

him. But, Richard was 14 years younger than Lee had been. With Richard's wins and wins scored by teammates, Lee gained an unprecedented four NASCAR owners' title. He owned the cars he drove to his own triumphs and has been buying cars from Chrysler on a sponsorship basis in recent years. Lee is the only man to hold circuit records for most titles as both driver and owner.

Lee also was three times voted most popular driver on the circuit by the fans. Richard won the honor for a second time in 1964. He took those title near-misses graciously, though he admits, "Three runner-ups were hard to take. But that's racing. I was close all those years and a better break here or there and I might have finished on top. You always have races where luck wins it or loses it for you. Take the Volunteer 500 at Bristol, Tenn., in 1964. I set track record qualifyin' and led all the way except for a few laps in the middle.

**B**UT THE TAILPIPE had bent in on the oil pan and three laps ahead with three laps to go, the engine blew. I tried to coast in, but I stopped dead on the last lap and Lorenzen blew by me to win. There've been enough races like that to make a brave man cry, but I won some like that, too. In the long run, the luck evens out and the better drivers win the most."

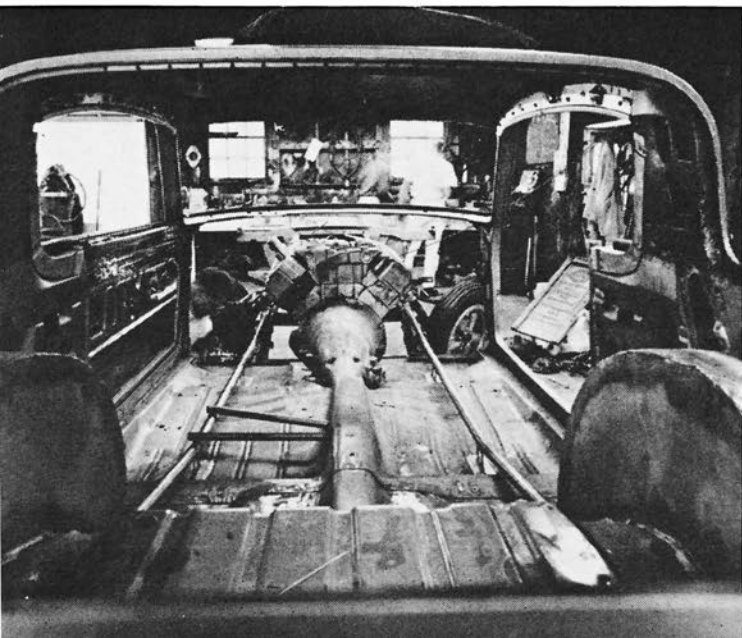
Richard sewed up the 1964 crown in a 250-miler on the half-mile asphalt at Martinsville, Va., but he almost

didn't make the show. He hit a wall in practice and didn't enter qualifying time trials. His crew worked all night to repair the car for a qualifying race the next day and Richard won it. He was forced to start near the rear of the pack, in 21st spot, but in 10 laps he moved up to tenth, in 70 laps to fifth and in 150 laps to the lead. However, such charging had overworked his car and it began to falter. Twice, he dropped back to fifth, but nursed it along and by the finish was in second place, behind Lorenzen, winning enough points to guarantee the title. "Some races you have to work like a dog just to get a couple of biscuits," Richard smiles. "But, I'll take anything I can get; I don't throw the small ones back."

Unlike Fred Lorenzen and a few others who pick their spots and point for the big races, particularly the long, rich events at the mile or longer super-speedways—Daytona, Darlington, Charlotte and Atlanta—Richard prefers to drive every race—big or small, long or short, dirt track or paved. This has paid off for him. While he has not won as many of the glamor events as his detractors feel he should, he runs and risks and reaps in the tough backwoods. Throughout 1964, he ran all 61 races, was first nine times, second 14 times and third 12 times. At one point, he was second in four straight races. Aside from his win in the Daytona 500, he won a 200-miler and a 100-miler at Nashville, a 200-miler at Huntington, W. Va., and 100-milers at South Boston, Va., Spartanburg, S. C., and Concord, N. C.

"We're in the racing business. We don't even really consider not running a race," Richard says proudly. "I'll bet I haven't missed half-a-dozen races since I started, until this year. I think

**BARE 'CUDA** in the Petty's Randleman preparation shop shows the construction thoroughness that wins races.



**COLUMN, WHEEL** and seat position, important for comfort in long races, are checked for Richard by cousin Gene.



CHRYSLER PHOTOS

it keeps me and my mechanics sharp. I get the experience so I know what a certain driver is liable to do or what's liable to happen to a certain car in a certain situation on a certain track.

**Y**OU DON'T have time to figure things out on the track, but if you know, if you really know, you react almost by reflex. You have to know yourself and your car and the other guys and their cars and the track and the kind of day it is and everything. Nothing is ever the same in racing. It's different every time. And you have to push everything to its limit *that* time and not a fraction beyond. If you get the most out of everything and you're lucky, maybe you'll win. If you don't, you'll lose. If you try to get too much, maybe you'll get hurt.

"I don't know what makes a good driver, exactly. I know someone asked me what I'd tell a boy wantin' to be a race driver and I said I'd tell him to go look for another profession. It's tough to break in and it's risky while you're learnin'. Actually, I guess it's like bein' any kind of a top athlete. Either you have it or you don't. If you have it, you can work on it and develop it. If you don't, forget it. It takes guts and brains and a strong back and a lot of things, like instinct, you can't put your finger on. Who knows when exactly to make a pass and when not to? If you're gonna' win, if you're gonna' live, you better know."

Since NASCAR struck gold, the southern circuit is no longer confined to poor boys who grew up with monkey-wrenches in their hands. Richard has an advantage over many drivers in that he is an excellent chassis man: "I've been working on cars in my Dad's garage since I was 12 which gives me about 15 years experience, which is a

lot for a young guy. I change things around on my cars so they're set up for the track, the distance, the speed. My brother, Maurice, works on the engines. Our Dad works on us. There are a lot of us, cousins and family and outsiders, too, and we yak at each other sometimes, but we're good and we get along pretty good.

"We change things right up to the time they drop that green flag. The extra mile an hour you get out of 'er or the extra bolt you screw in that holds 'er together the last minute maybe makes the difference between winning and comin' out alive and nothin'. You get a good car, you got to handle it right and make it last. One thing's for sure, no driver ever got to the finish line first without a good car under him. You can't beat anyone walkin'. And there's nothin' more discouragin' than to have worked your tail off in a long race and get to near the finish line first and have the car give out on you. That takes the heart out of you."

Richard should be able to regain his best form quickly. He points out, "I go play a little pick-up basketball, I come home sore as an office-worker. But I can squeeze into the cockpit of a racin' car and run a long, hard, fast race and not mind it because that's what I've trained for. I don't actually train, but it has been my life—50, 60 races a year. The long races aren't necessarily harder than the short ones. The long ones are long and fast, but the tracks are mostly good. A lot of the short ones are on tracks that beat the blazes out of you and your car. The hot ones get you as much as anything. In mid-summer it sometimes gets so hot inside those cars your blood likes to boil. It saps a lot of strength out of you and slows your reflexes down and if it's a long race that lulls you it can be risky."

Petty is a proud man. He prefers the more difficult tracks. Although he has had more luck on short tracks, he is hungry to conquer the big tracks. "I've had a lot of bad luck in big races and I'm lookin' to win some," he shrugs. "Daytona is the fastest, but it's not the most difficult. Darlington's the one I want to beat. Every turn is different there and you have to drive real close to the hairy edge. It's a real race driver's track. Nashville is the toughest short track. Each corner is tricky and you have to head straight for the fence goin' into each corner and head straight for the infield comin' out. A lot of the dirt tracks are rough. They take as much out of a car in a different way as runnin' flat out for a long time on a big paved track does. The thing you like about dirt tracks is that the driver becomes more important than the car."

**R**ICHARD RESPECTS his rivals. "In the long races with the factories shinin' up all that fancy metal and the big money at stake, I figure I have six or seven men to beat. I guess Freddie Lorenzen's the best. He's the best on paved tracks. There's only two or three usually hard to beat in the shorter races. Ned Jarrett is the best on small tracks, especially on dirt. David Pearson is getting to be almost as good. Actually, the good drivers are tough to beat under any circumstances—Junior Johnson, Marvin Panch, Darel Dieringer, that rookie, Dick Hutcherson, and A. J. Foyt. I don't care if it's NASCAR or USAC or Grand Prix, a good driver's a good driver."

A fighter like his father, Richard will use his fists at times. Once when a race was called off in Asheville, angry spectators closed in on drivers and officials. Three drunks stormed in swinging tire irons. Richard wiped

RICHARD PETTY was greeted with a standing ovation as he appeared for the 1965 Volunteer 500, battled Fred Lorenzen (28), lost eight laps on a pit stop, then returned to the race only to become involved in a 5-car smashup on the 128th lap.





# PETTY *"I race because it's good business."*

them out. "He's as good a fighter with his bare fists as I ever saw," veteran NASCAR official Pat Purcell recalls with delight. Another time, Richard and Gentleman Ned Jarrett swung on each other. Richard makes light of such incidents. "This is a pretty tense business. Things happen on a race course that upset you. You're gonna' have run-ins with other drivers. But, heck, you cool off. No one carries grudges. We're all in this together and we respect each other."

Over the years NASCAR has had a good safety record, but in one recent span of about a year, Glen (Fireball) Roberts, Joe Weatherly, Billy Wade and Jim Pardue were killed. "For about 10 years, we'd had only one death," Lee pointed out. "We ran into a rash of them, but it seems to be over now. There's no explaining it, except that this is a dangerous business and these things happen. But NASCAR takes a lot of safety precautions and our drivers are better protected in those enclosed cars than the drivers are in other circuits in those open-cockpit cars. I get a little nervous workin' in Richard's pits, but he's pretty good."

Richard visited Indianapolis before the 500 last year. "I've thought about driving Indy," he admitted with a smile. "A hundred and fifty grand is a lot of money for winning one race. And I've had offers and could have a good car and a good crew. And it'd be quite a challenge for me. But I don't really like those little 'Junebugs.' I know other Southern drivers have said

they don't like to see that blue sky from open-cockpit cars, but that's not what would get me. It's seein' all that darned pavement around you. I don't think I could stand seein' that and those wheels and suspension arms in front of me. Of course I might change my mind after I took a couple of laps around the track, but I don't think I'll try it. To tell you the truth, that's why I don't go to see the race. I figure I might get tempted. I was at Indy only once before, when I was 15, in 1952. If I did run it, I'd have to miss some big NASCAR races. And I'm not foolish enough to think I could do well without a lot of practice in these different cars. No, I think I'd better stick to my own backyard."

**I**N HIS BACKYARD, he is unafraid. "It's a dangerous business," he admits. "You come pretty dad-gum close to each other in traffic in competition. It used to be in stock car races you could nudge each other, but we're going so blasted fast now we don't hit anyone on purpose. You run the rail like it was your girl, too. You beat up a fender here and there. I've been lucky. I've never had a stock car upside down. I've run 'em into fences—through 'em, over and under 'em—but I always stayed right side up. I've been shook up, but never hurt bad. I guess I've been lucky. Anyway we're in show business and we've got to put on a show for the people. Mebbe I'll feel different after I have an accident like Dad had. But so far, I've not been

scared in particular. I don't think you can drive scared. If I ever get to feelin' scared, I guess I'll quit. I don't like it when other drivers get hurt or killed. These are my friends, but I accept it. We all do. This is the business. No one makes us get into it or stay in it. We've got a lot to lose, but racing gives us what we've got."

**R**ICHARD AND his wife, Lynda, have three children, Kyle, 5, Sharon, 4, and Lisa, 1. The three romp freely with the dog around the spacious Petty home grounds. They live in a nice, but modest house in the Petty family circle. Because it is out in the sticks, far from any town of size, it is obvious the bright lights are not for them. Yet Richard could afford an extravagant life if he wished. He estimates he has earned \$300,000 in racing, including \$98,810 in 1964 which is second only to the \$113,570 Fred Lorenzen won in 1963 to set a NASCAR record. Additionally, he estimated \$200,000 passed through the Petty Plymouth garage in 1964.

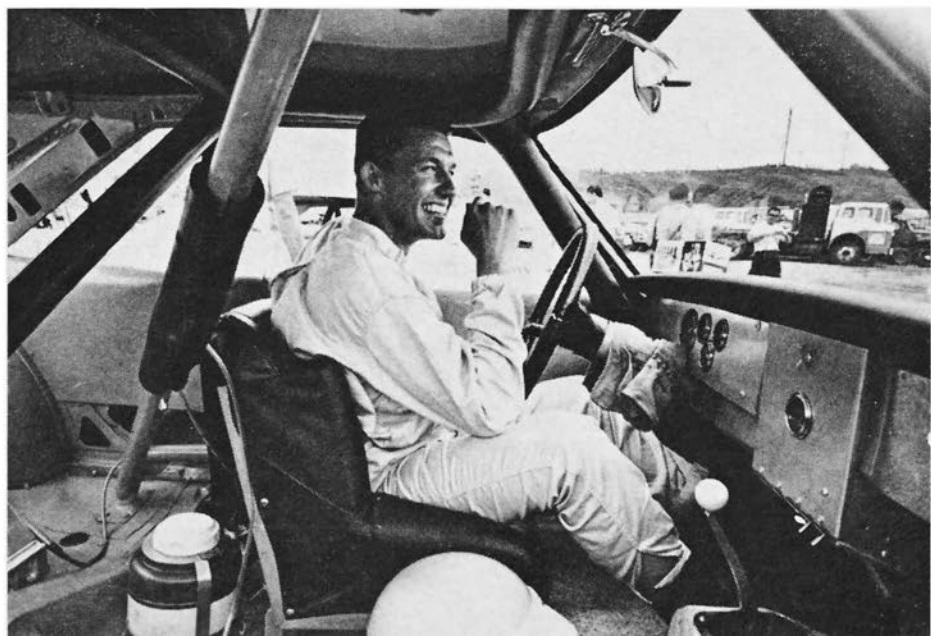
Richard is a businesslike driver. Once a local businessman offered a special \$1000 prize to the driver who led the 107th lap of the Daytona 500. "I kept looking at the scoreboard for the lap number," Richard admits with a guilty grin. When Lap 107 rolled around, Petty had taken the lead.

Richard once said, "I race because it's a good business. I'd run a supermarket if I could make more." Now he admits, "No, I'd rather race than anything, and I guess I'd do it even if something else paid more . . . not too much more, anyway," he grinned. "I guess if Dad had been a farmer, I'd have been a farmer. He was a race driver, so I became a race driver. Dad runs our race business."

DAD TALKS race tactics with son during Bristol Volunteer 500.



THE PETTY smile, a well prepared car and a gallon of drinking water for the long, dry haul await the starter's green flag.



CHRYSLER PHOTOS

**I**T'S A FAMILY business, but he owns it and he's the boss. I get paid a salary for working in the garage and for driving and I get paid a percentage of our winnings. Maurice, who drives a little, too, is on the same basis. We work hard. Hard work is the secret of our success.

"I've got some stocks. The house is all paid for. The kids are all paid for. I'm only 27 and I'm satisfied. Three or four more good years and I won't ever have to worry again about money."

He seems to enjoy speaking in a Southern, drawling slang, but this is deceptive. He is an exceptionally sharp and intelligent young man. But he is a country boy and glad of it. He is at home in sport shirt, levis and high boots. This sunny day, he stood in the cool of a shade tree, breathed in fresh air, looked at the open country around him and tried to ignore the relentless hammering of the big-time racing mechanical operation that was going on in the garage.

"We could move to the big city, but we like it here," he said. "Mom and Pop have their house and Maurice and his family have their house and we're all together. We're near the airport, so it's easy to get equipment shipped in and out and I can fly out easy. And I'm so used to it, I don't think nothin' of jumpin' in a car and drivin' eight or nine hundred miles for a race. Maybe we seem sort of stuck out here in the country, but you don't like to get above your raisin', you know.

"We go bowling once in awhile, but we don't like to go out a lot. We enjoy family. Racing is excitement enough for us. What does Lynda like to do? Look after the kids, I guess," he grinned.

We asked pretty Lynda, who smiled. "Looking after the kids isn't my idea

of a high old time, really," she smiled, "but I'm proud of the kids and I guess I'm a family girl. I'm country, too, like Richard. I go to all the races I can. I really get a kick out of it. Actually, I'm just like any other fan. Maybe I get more excited because of Richard, but in the longer races I get sort of bored and restless just like anyone else. But it's an exciting life and Richard is so good at it that I'm very proud of him. I worry about him, sure. It's dangerous. But I know he's good and can take care of himself. And he makes a good living for us doing it."

**R**ICHARD'S MOTHER, who lives with the sport with husband and sons, said she wasn't upset when her husband turned race driver at the age of 35. "I told him, if that's what he wanted to do, to go ahead and do it. But I'll admit I thought he was just skylarkin'. I had no idea it would come to all of this," she said, looking around her helplessly. "When Lee had his accident in '61, I wasn't surprised. I always knew it could happen. That was a hard time. And when Lee was so hard on Richard when Richard was starting and people found fault with him, I was a little upset, too, but I came to see that it was best to show him it wasn't going to be easy."

She looked up at me. "I'm afraid for them, certainly," she said, "but I don't worry about them all the time. They're good at it and they work hard at it and they don't take any unnecessary chances. This is their life and I wouldn't interfere in what they want to do. And it's a good life. People have the wrong impression of auto racing. Maybe it started out wild with a bunch of bootleggers and all, but it's a real clean sport now. There's a lot of manliness to it. And my family has been some-

thing special in it and I'm proud. It's a business like any other business. And I think what makes me feel best of all is that it's kept us close. We're a real close family."

**R**ICHARD HAS made a point of being called Richard, not Dick. He once told a writer, "If my mother had wanted me to be called Dick, she'd have named me that. She named me Richard." However, he told me, "I don't really get all that upset about it. If you slip and call me Dick, I won't jump all over you."

Like his mother, Richard is proud of his family and his profession. "It started out wild, but it's grown up. There's a better class of people in it now, as clean a group as you find anywhere. An occasional drunk will heckle a driver, but it's a solid sport now. It's a hard way to make a living, but I like it."

However, as he sets out on the road to regaining his lost laurels at Daytona and other Southern spots, he has no illusions about it being a soft touch. He took us out behind the Petty garage where in a weedy hollow lay a pile of twisted and broken cars large enough to gladden the heart of an auto junkyard owner or a demolition derby promoter. "Any time I get to feelin' too cocky, I can always come back here and look at this and sober up," Richard said.

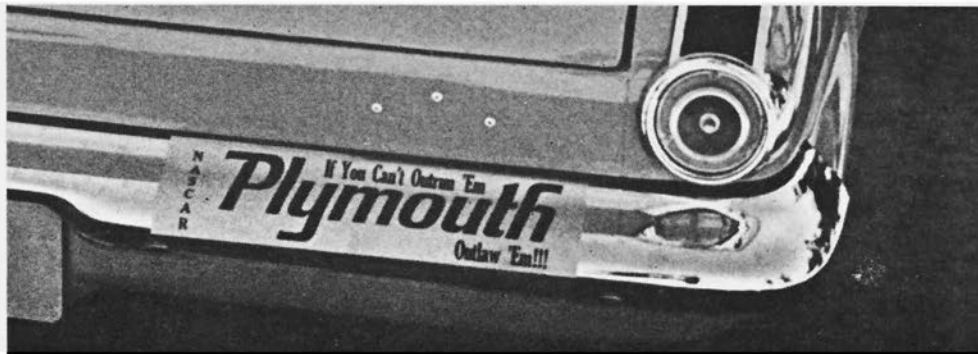
**H**OW MANY of these wrecks did he put there? "About half of them," he grinned. "I've done my share of winnin', but I've done my share of this kind of losin', too," he said.

"Not your share, not of losing, not really, Dick," we yelled as we leaped into our car and lit out of there like an old revenooer. ■

**TENSION SHOWS** on Richard's face as he waits out a pit stop.



**BUMPER STICKER** on the Petty drag Barracuda let NASCAR know how the family racing team felt about the outlaw King Kong.



**A BLOWN** tire didn't hamper Richard Petty in the 1964 Daytona 500. He led for 375 laps and blasted to victory ahead of Plymouthmen Jim Pardue and Paul Goldsmith. With Petty absent, the 1965 race was a different story—all Lorenzen and Ford.

