

DAVEY BROWN, SR.



Davey Brown, Sr. Bruce Craig Photos

David Walton Brown grew up on a farm near Delta, Pennsylvania, on May 31, 1934, to parents William and Ruth Brown. He had one brother, Harold, and two sisters, Marie and Dorothy.

Following World War II, high school friends Johnny Mackison and Davey Brown built jalopies of their own to race at the local dirt tracks of Mason-Dixon Speedway in Wakefield, and Bowling Green in Jefferson. It wasn't long before Davey realized that Johnny was a better driver, so Brown became Mackison's mechanic.

They raced a few times with their 1938 Ford coupe the first season in 1953, and won the track championship the second year at Bowling Green. Mackison soon became the scourge of Pennsylvania's mid-state circuit, with Brown as his wrench, in the mid-1950's.

In 1957, they bought a brand-new Ford and ran it in the Grand National division of the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR). They made five starts, finishing in the top five once and the top ten twice, including an eighth place finish at Darlington. They made eleven starts in 1958 in NASCAR's convertible series with a factory Mercury for Kenny Carman, with a pair of top-five's and three top-ten's.

From 1959 through '62, Brown remembers Mackison winning 41 of 63 races one year and more than 30 in each of the other years. Together, over a ten year period, they won somewhere near 250 features in jalopies, modifieds and 30-by-90's. At the end of the '62 season, at age 28, Johnny Mackison retired from driving after getting married.

In 1964, Brown helped Dick "Toby" Tobias defend the twin 'Grove titles for '63 with the Roy "Shorty" Emrich Chevrolet car. In all they earned seventeen wins at Selinsgrove, twelve at Williams Grove, five at Susquehanna, and two at Port Royal in '64. Milford Wales, the team's second driver, also collected three wins that year at Susky with Davey wrenching.

1965 saw Tobias and Brown leave the lightweight 30-by-90's of the mid-state circuit for the fame and fortune of the Eastern Pennsylvania heavies, or Reading Fairgrounds modifieds. Davey's success continued at Reading with Tobias and later with Bobby Gerhart, Sr. In 1966, Brown spent his Saturday nights at Port Royal helping Richard "Mitch" Smith and the Flack Brothers' 'Flying Tiger' 30-by-90.

Williams Grove legalized sprint cars in 1967 and the other tracks followed suit one year later. However, at Susky in '67, Reading-style modifieds, 30-by-90's with carburetors, and 30-by-90's with fuel injectors all raced against each other. Gerhart, with a carburetor, and Brown won seven times that year on their way to the Susquehanna point title.

After helping propel Bobby Gerhart, Sr., and the A.T. Consoli team to nearly forty feature wins and the Reading track championship twice, Davy went back to work for furniture dealer Joel Anthony. He built a 400-cubic-inch lightweight Mustang modified for open-wheel racer Donnie Varner in 1973, taking advantage of a 200-pound weight break for small blocks. Tobias, after his first stint in United States Auto Club (USAC) sprint cars, replaced the injured Varner and collected sixteen checkered flags at Reading alone. In '74, the weight break ended and Toby still won eight times at Reading.

A year later, Brown and Tobias built a Mustang II with a big-block, notch-

ing 25 victories and capping the 1975 season with a big win on the New York State Fair mile track in Syracuse. But, according to the soft-spoken Brown, "Toby got tired of the modifieds. He wanted to go USAC sprint car racing."

Success at the 1978 ABC-televised Tony Hulman Classic at Terre Haute, Ind., and on the Indiana State Fairgrounds mile track was followed by tragedy at Flemington, N.J. Toby flipped to his death at the track he hated. And Brown seriously considered retirement from the sport he loved.

During this period of his life, Davey had a full-time job outside of racing, either as a pipe insulator, an auto mechanic, or assembling rear ends at Winters Performance in York. However, his passion for the sport was so great that he could not just walk away from it. He finished 1978 by guiding Kramer Williamson to a win in the Williams Grove National Open in Ed Karwaski's Applehouse Special. It was Davey's first National Open win, and it was also sanctioned by Ted Johnson's fledgling World of Outlaws (WoO).

During the winter of 1978-79, Lynn Paxton and Maynard Boop formed a sprint car team, and they hired Davey Brown and his 21-year-old son Davey Allen, better known as Davey, Jr., as mechanics. They won 25 times in 1979 with their big block, including three straight against the WoO troops. One year later they scored three more WOO victories, and 21 wins overall including Port Royal's Tuscarora 50. In '82, the Brown's wrenched Paxton to seven feature wins and the Williams Grove title, ten feature wins and the Selinsgrove title, and another two wins at Port Royal utilizing a Gary Stanton chassis and a Charlie Lloyd chassis. One of those wins at Williams Grove was Lynn's first National Open victory.

Said Paxton of Brown, "The man is phenomenal. Whenever he'd put a new motor together he was always nervous as a cat. And he was so pessimistic. I'd say, 'You're lucky that I'm self-motivated.' He doesn't say much. If you need somebody to get you pumped up for drivin', Davey's not the guy. And he was very matter-of-fact about things. If I screwed up, he'd say, 'That was stupid.' I'd try to explain, but his mind was made up. And if you did good, he would never say anything. So, if he wasn't saying anything, he was pretty happy."

After leading every lap to win his second Williams Grove National Open, Paxton retired in 1983. In May of '84, veteran sprint car owner Bob Weikert of Weikert's Livestock in Fairfield hired the father-son combo as mechanics. They had actually worked for Bob years earlier in a brief stint with driver Paul Pitzer. By July Weikert had successfully hired Sioux Falls, S.D., ace Doug Wolfgang as driver. The teaming of Bob Weikert, Davey Brown, Jr., Davey Brown, Sr., and Doug Wolfgang produced a sprint car racing dynasty which lasted into 1987.

In 1984 they won the Knoxville Nationals and the Williams Grove National Open. The Weikert team won a record 54 races in 1985, including one at season's end with Kenny Jacobs subbing for Wolfgang. Although the team was based in Central Pennsylvania, their victories included the Kings Royal, Knoxville Nationals, Jackson Nationals, Sharon Nationals, Tuscarora 50, and Williams Grove National Open. The season included a stretch where they won 17 consecutive mains and they easily earned the National Sprint Car Poll's inaugural "Team of the Year" honors.

Davey, Jr., maintained the car and worked on race-day set-ups with driver Wolfgang, frequently in consultation with Davey, Sr., who provided the horsepower. They backed up 1985 with a 40-win season in '86, including victories at the Sharon Nationals, Tuscarora 50, and Williams Grove National Open. And, with a volatile car owner, an intense driver, and a high-strung chassis man, there were bound to be difficult times for a team that raced over 100 nights a year together. According to Wolfgang, "When things would get out of control, Davey would just walk in and say, 'Well, if it was me, I'd do it this way.' He didn't tell you to do it. He'd just say 'If it was me...' Well, you bet your sweet ass when Davey said 'If it was me I'd do it this way,' we did it that way."

In 1987, Davey, Jr., was the first to leave the Weikert team due to the constant pressure, followed by Wolfgang later in the season. The team

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disbanded, but not before winning another 31 times, including victories at a second Jackson Nationals and a fourth straight Tuscarora 50.

In late '88, when Weikert wanted Kenny Jacobs to drive the Beefmobile, Jacobs wanted the Brown's. They won the Sharon Nationals and the Williams Grove National Open. Even Jeff Brown was on the crew. Said Senior of his relationship with Weikert, "Oh, we come and go."

Since then, Brown worked for a variety of teams, including Don Kreitz, Jr. Said Kreitz, "He's just amazing. There is no one in the whole country, with the possible exception of Karl Kinser, who's that sharp on chassis and engines. Davey Brown is great on both of them."

Many sprint car drivers have had their career-best seasons with Brown in their pit. Cris Eash was no exception in 1993. In '94, Brown helped the versatile Billy Pauch to win the elusive Syracuse SuperNationals sprint car race on the tricky mile fairgrounds track. According to Brown, "I won Knoxville, Eldora and the Williams Grove National Open, but I'd never won Syracuse. I figured they were the big four and I finally won them all. After all those years!"

Most recently, Davey Brown Sr., has worked with and built motors for the talented Chesson brothers, James and P. J.

Davey Brown, Sr., and his wife Barbara had three daughters, April, Gail, Dawn, and two sons. Jeff worked in this dad's motor shop and helped local sprint car racers on weekends. Davey, Jr., drove for a short while, worked at the Harley-Davidson plant, and then followed in this father's footsteps by becoming a full-time and well-respected sprint car mechanic. Because of his family, the elder Brown never wanted to be on the road full-time. According to him, "When you have a family, you gotta give up an awful lot."

According to Lynn Paxton, "He started back in the '50s and even today when you talk about the best mechanics in the country, Davey Brown's name has to surface. The only one in his class is Karl Kinser."