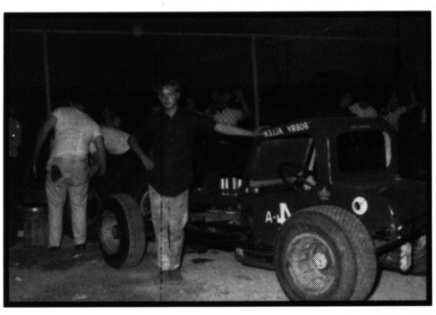
BOBBY ALLEN

Bobby Allen was born on December 28, 1943, in Miami (Fla.). Bobby's dad, Joe, raced in the early days of the National Association of Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR). Joe competed often with the likes of Marshall Teague and Edward "Fireball" Roberts before he married and became a full-time airline pilot, which ended his driving days. And ever since he was nine years old, Bobby knew he wanted to be a race car driver, too.



Bobby Allen *(Donated by Roy Denklau)*

Bobby started his career racing half-midgets at the age of twelve. It didn't take long for him to move up into the world-class, ultralight go-karts, though. In 1960, he claimed the NASSAU kart event at the Oakes Field Airport and two years later he was crowned the world go-kart champion. At the time, Bobby worked as a parts boy for 1960 Indianapolis 500 winner Jim Rathmann in Miami, where Jim marketed the famed Xterminator kart. Being around Jim sparked Bobby's dream to one day run Indy cars and the "500." Bobby once said, "All sorts of Indy bigshots were in and out of Rathmann's place. One of 'em was Bob Wilke, the Leader Card guy. Wilke liked me. Talked about givin' me a shot in one of his cars. He was serious, too. But he died unexpectedly."

Between racing karts and dreaming of Indy, Bobby and his friends Richard (Lupo) and Steve (Smith) were hanging around race tracks like Hialeah (Fla.) Speedway. They loved watching their heroes: Bobby Johns, Allan "Rags" Carter, Bobby and Donnie Allison, "Red" Farmer, Herbie Tillman, Jackie Evans, Gil Hearne, "Pee Wee" Griffin, and Rod Perry.

Bobby was the first of his friends to actually race the stock cars when he purchased a modified coupe, known as "The Twister," from Hialeah legend Bobby Brack. Allen also raced at places like the Palmetto Speedway in Medley and the Miami-Hollywood Speedway. In 1963 and '64, Allen raced and won with a Robert Hamke (Sr.)-built winged super-modified number 4, creatively known as the "Bobby Allen Special." Hamke, a master builder, took a liking to the young Allen and he built the car as an exact duplicate of his own potent number 119 modified. Allen's mechanics were his friends, Lupo and Smith.

According to Bobby, "I was 20 years old. Doris and I were goin' together at the time, and the service kinda helped push me into getting married, 'cause married guys got deferments back then. I figured I'd be at the (Indianapolis Motor) Speedway for sure by the time I was 22."

The mid-1960's was also a time when a lot of Allen's heroes started moving north in search of more races and more money. "The Alabama Gang" headed to NASCAR, and Carter, Hearne, Griffin and Tillman headed to New Jersey and Pennsylvania with their modified stock cars. So racer Allen and mechanic Lupo headed north, too, with their pavement super-modified. According to "Smokey" Yunick, "Bobby was a pretty fair welder. He also put together his very first car in my shop, and it looked like some farmer had built it. It was a pretty lightweight car. Bobby seemed to like everybody, and everybody liked him, and one day he just up and drove off into the sunset and I've never seen him again."

Following a short stay on a pig farm in the Penn-Jersey area, Allen and Lupo spent time with modified driver Leon Manchester. Leon helped Allen refine the welding skills that he had originally learned from Hamke. By 1966, Allen had "settled" near Hanover (Penna.) and was racing his number 4-A car at famed Central Pennsy tracks like Williams Grove Speedway in Mechanicsburg and Lincoln Speedway in New Oxford. Hilly Rife, promoter at Lincoln, helped by giving Bobby $40 a night at his tracks.

In fact, it was "promoter" Rife who encouraged Allen to put Lupo in Bobby's car when Bobby started driving for Charlie Hill, and to bring his other friend Steve Smith, now a driver himself, north to race. Down the road, Bobby Allen would meet fellow traveller Dub May, with May following him back to Hanover from El Paso (Tex.). Dubbie's little brother Van May came next, followed soon by Van's friend Steve Siegel. Thus, with Bobby's younger brother Joey, "The Hanover Gang" was born, with Bobby as its leader.

The early years in Hanover were tough for Bobby and Doris, though. Many times they slept in trucks, under trucks, in the ticket booth at Lincoln, or in the barns at Williams Grove until they were run off. Friends often bought Bobby's pit passes. Said Allen, "We always snuck everybody else into the pits, my crew and people like that. I mean that was just normal. We just hid 'em everywhere and snuck 'em in."

In 1967 and '68, driving for Charlie Hill in the super-modified number 456 and with young mechanic Tommy Sanders by his side, Bobby wasn't just racing as he was getting his first wins at tracks like Lincoln, Hagerstown (Md.) and Dorsey (Md). He won the Lincoln track championship in '67, only to repeat the feat in 1969 and '70. Tommy Sanders, last year's National Sprint Car Poll "Builder/Manufacturer of the Year," once said, "Bobby—he was my true teacher. He took the time to show me the real guts of race car engineering. If I'm good, and people say I am, then it's mostly because of Bobby Allen. He's been the biggest single influence on my racin' life."

Bobby Allen *(Photo by David T. Lawless)*

In 1968, local sprint car driver Lynn Paxton had partnered with car owner L.H. "Shorty" Emrich to form a solid team. One year later, Allen joined Paxton on the Emrich Chevrolet team for a very successful venture that lasted over five years. Bobby won over 65 features for "Shorty" in the tri-state area and on Jack Gunn's tough Keystone Auto Racing Speedways (KARS) circuit during the late 1960's and early '70's. He won the Susquehanna track title in '69, too. According to Bobby, "Up in Pennsylvania, there was Shorty Emrich. Shorty was a mover and shaker on the Central Pennsylvania sprint car scene. And I hooked up with him. Shorty actually bought me a pretty good Indy Car from Grant King (in '70). It had been Art Pollard's ride. Shorty's and my deal was real basic. He bought the thing; the rest of the financial problem was mine. I had saved up thirty grand, a fortune insofar as I was concerned. I took the car to Phoenix and two other races. Man, I'll tell ya! That car ate up my fortune of thirty grand faster than baked beans will go through an ol' lady. I was broke. The car was parked. And I hadn't even really hit my ass. Here's what I saw; I could go run USAC (United States Auto Club) sprints, get in line with the rest of those guys … and hope. Hope somebody would put me in an Indy car. The USAC sprints ran once or twice a week. No way to make a living doin' that. On the other hand, the outlaw sprints ran three or four times a week. Just in Pennsylvania. There was also plenty of stuff goin' on out of state. There was a living there all right. Plus, I could build cars and sell 'em. I buried my Indy dream. Been an outlaw ever since."

It was also in 1970 that C.H. "Bud" Miller organized the All Star Circuit of Champions (ASCoC) in Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York with an 11-race series of Wednesday night 100-lappers paying $1,000 to win. Allen picked up one win at the Wayne County Speedway in Orrville (Ohio) and finished second in points to Ralph Quarterson. Those finishing behind Allen in the points were Lee Osborne, Lou Blaney, Dick Swartslander and Jan Opperman.

In '73, when the ASCoC went nationwide with its point races, Allen won his first of four Western Pennsylvania State Championship races at Mercer (Pa.) and another ASCoC show at Fremont (Ohio). He placed third in points behind Opperman and Ralph Parkinson (Jr.), further enhancing Bobby's reputation as one of the "original outlaws" along with Rick Ferkel, Gary Patterson, Opperman and Norman "Bubby" Jones. During the early seventies, Bobby also competed with the International Motor Contest Association (IMCA) during its annual Winternationals competition at the Florida State Fairgrounds in Tampa.

Bobby's biggest win to date came in late 1975 when he won the $3,500-to-win Williams Grove National Open, the race most drivers east of the Mississippi River grew up wanting to win. It was an exciting win for Bobby, Doris and their two daughters, Robin and Dana.

Allen built his first sprint car in his Hanover shop during the winter of 1968, and he's been building them there ever since. Although his go-kart was sometimes "impounded" during his high school days for poor grades, he has truly always shown a keen knowledge of mechanical engineering. According to Opperman, "Back when I was racin' with (Dick) Bogar and (Ralph) Heintzelman, we had two cars. The ol' ninety-nines—the ol' orange shitboxes. One was an Allen, the other a Heintzelman usin' plenty of Allen's tricks. I don't know where or how Bobby Allen learned his stuff, but he was a mile ahead of everyone else. Back in them days, (Floyd) Trevis cars got all the publicity in Pennsylvania racin'. And they were neat. But Allen was into all kinds of lightweight metals, weird chassis deals, tire combos—everything. Bobby really blew my mind. He wasn't selfish—he could have run us all outta the game by keepin' his secrets to himself. But that ain't Allen. He showed us his ways—he helped everybody. He was never any greedy hero type—just a good dude. Guys like me, bummin' around the country—we dragged Allen's ideas with us. Back to (Don) Maxwell's shop in Lincoln and a bunch of other joints. Because of Bobby, sprint car drivin' got to be a lot easier."

Ferkel agrees, "Back in the late 1960's and early 1970's, we were all struggling to master the mysteries of what has become today's state-of-the-art sprint car. It was a lot of experimentation with rollcenter heights, lightweight metals, drastically different tire combinations and the aerodynamic leverage of wings. Bobby was more advanced than the rest of us. We were tryin'

(Bobby Allen Bio Continues Below)

to learn what he had evidently already learned. Remember, he had a real versatile background in racing. And even as a kid, he had hung around with some big names in the business. A versatile group of big names, at that. From the Allisons … to sporty car guys … to Indy car people. Along with bein' naturally smart, he also must've remembered every useful thing he ever heard. Jan is right. Bob coulda put us all outta the business. Instead, he helped us. One of the most unselfish people I've ever met."

Teammate Paxton nicknamed Allen "Scruffy" for his long, shaggy hair and his stone-chipped cars, which is ironic as Bobby was voted "best dressed" in his high school class of '62. Either way, the easy-going Hanover pacer continued his winning ways through the mid-1970's, capturing the Reading (Pa.) Fairgrounds title in '76. Reading is also the site where Bobby took on the "heavies" with a modified of his own design in the Seventies. But stock cars weren't his thing, even as a hobby, so when Ted Johnson organized the World of Outlaws (WoO) in 1978, Bobby Allen was a card-carrying member. In fact, in '78, Bobby won twice with the WoO in his own number 1a sprinter, sponsored by Jasper Petitte's M&J Coal Company of Morgantown (W.V.). Allen finished the inaugural national tour third in points, behind Steve Kinser and Rick Ferkel.

In 1979, Bobby continued running with the WoO, picking up one win and finishing seventh in points. That was the same year that Ohioans Jerry Clum and Bert Emick revived the All Star Circuit of Champions, using the Midwest Outlaw Super Series (MOSS) name for two seasons. Bobby finished fourth in MOSS points behind Dub May, Jim Linder and George Harbour.

Throughout the 1980's and '90's, Bobby Allen has continued his outlaw ways, picking and choosing between the Outlaws, All Stars, Central Pennsy circuit, and whatever other shows look appealing to him in his number 1a. And the wins have continued to mount, with historian Kevin Eckert giving "Scruffy" credit for over 242 wins on at least 62 tracks in some 20-odd states in two countries (U.S.A. and Australia). Bruce Ellis has written that Bobby has at least 529 "top five" finishes in Central Pennsylvania. According to Allen, "I guess you might call me an 'outlaw' outlaw racer. I kinda look for the best deal. Nobody owns me. I like to play it by ear."

In 1980, Allen won the $10,000-to-win MOSS (All Star Circuit) point title over Jack Hewitt, Al Hager, Johnny Beaber, Ferkel, Bobby Adkins, Harbour, Kenny Jacobs, Danny Smith and Jac Haudenschild. The early Eighties found Bobby continuing his winning ways, including at the '82 Port Royal (Pa.) Tuscarora 50. His self-proclaimed strategy was "to survive the winters and make enough money to get going in the spring."

Allen added old friend Richard Lupo to his Allen Enterprises stable in an Allen chassis number 2a in 1983. The strategy paid off at an All Star show in Pennsboro (W.V.) when Bobby won, claiming $25,000, and Richard finished third, collecting another $6,000. Said Bobby afterwards, "That really pulled us out of the hole. The deal is I put 80% of what I win back into the equipment. Richard puts back 90%. I get a big kick out of giving guys a chance."

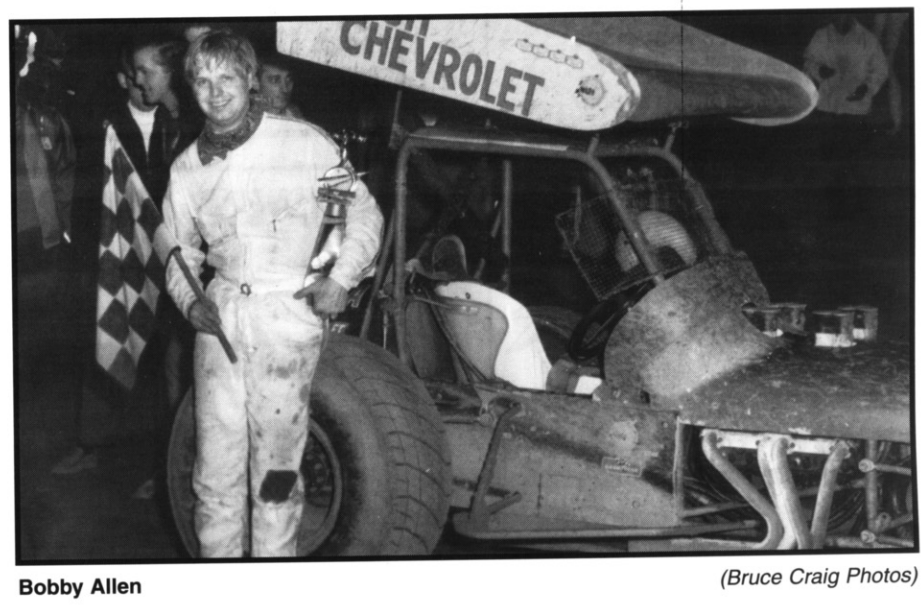
Bobby must have needed another "kick" the following season, as he put friend Steve Stambaugh in a third Allen Enterprises entry, this one numbered 3a. In 1984 WoO points, Bobby finished 8th, Richard 18th, and Steve 27th.

The rest of the 1980's continued to provide a good life for Bobby Allen and his family. He had his race car-building business, he assembled his own engines, he operated a go-kart track next to his shop, and he continued winning, including at the 1986 Jackson (Minn.) and Eldora (Rossburg, Ohio) Nationals and the '89 Tuscarora 50. He always seemed to have mechanics and friends around, like Gene Stambaugh, Fred Smith, Bob "Whiskers" Reynolds, Chris Smalley and Jack Eckert, although they may not have gone to each and every race with him. He always seemed to have associate sponsors, like WSBA, Hoff Insurance and "Chub" Ciarocchi of CnB Mushroom Farms. And he had many within the sport who considered him a "hero," including fellow outlaw champion Doug Wolfgang.

The early 1990's were high times for Bobby Allen. His reputation in sprint car racing was established as an innovative builder, a bare-bones car owner (with plenty of duct tape and very little paint), and a tactical racer. He set track records in time trials from Ascot Park to Williams Grove when the track cushion was wicked fast, then he would set up his car for the conditions at the end of the features when the surface was dry slick and the low groove was the way around. According to Bobby, "In the beginning when you first start racing, you're young and you've got lots of desire and no experience. Then in the middle of the deal you win a lot, 'cause you've got a good mixture of desire and experience. In the end you do it all on experience."

Allen's experience paid off "big time" in August of 1990 when he won sprint car racing's crown jewel, the Knoxville (Iowa) Nationals. According to Bob Wilson's press release, "Bobby Allen claimed a popular and surprising $35,000 victory as he staged some late race heroics to win the 30th annual Knoxville Nationals before 18,000 spectators at the Knoxville Raceway Saturday night." Allen beat Sammy Swindell, Stevie Smith, Danny Lasoski and D-Main winner Doug Wolfgang to earn the NAPA Knoxville Nationals win.

In 1991, "Scruffy" finished 12th in WoO points, the 14th consecutive and final year that he would finish in the "top 15" in Ted Johnson's "King of the Outlaws" point standings. The next season, Allen finished sixth in Bert Emick's ASCoC points, too. However, as the decade of the Nineties comes to a close, the winning pace has slowed. But with Steve Kinser and Jack Hewitt giving the new Indy Racing League (IRL) a try, you never know what the future holds for Bobby Allen; a true outlaw who once said, "Do you think a person can actually dig a deep enough hole to bury a big-time dream? Do you think that's really possible? I don't."



Bobby Allen *(Bruce Craig Photos)*