

DEAN THOMPSON

Dean Thompson was born March 16, 1950 in Inglewood (Calif.) to Marjorie and George "Bud" Thompson. He has one sister, Barbara, and one half-brother, the late Bill Harrison. Dean was born with his left arm shorter than his right arm, and with a misshapen hand, however, he has never been one to let anything stand in the way of his dreams.

Dean grew up around racing, as his father "Bud" was the mechanic for the Bruce Bromme (Sr.) team when he wasn't tending to the Thompson family glass company.



Dean Thompson

(Mike Arthur Photo)

At age five, the blonde, curly-headed youngster started driving quarter-midgets. It wasn't long before he was wheeling his Bromme-crafted quarter-midget against young racers like Bobby Olivero, Ron "Sleepy" Tripp, Billy Allen, Buster Venard and Billy Felts.

Dean raced quarter-midgets until age 12, then took some time off before returning to the cockpit of a three-quarter-midget at age 18. He continued competing against the likes of TQ racers Olivero, the Caruthers brothers, and the Carter brothers.

Thompson raced full midgets as well, until his big break came in mid-1972 when Parnelli's brother Paul Jones quit the Bromme Offy-powered sprint car at Phoenix (Ariz). Bruce needed a driver and Dean was there to fill the seat. Unfortunately for Dean, Jones reconsidered and Thompson was forced to ride-hop the rest of the '72 season. Not one to let anything get in his way, "Deano" still claimed the California Racing Association (CRA) "Rookie of the Year" title that season.

When Paul Jones finally retired, Dean again followed him into Bromme's famed red "Andy Gump" car in 1974. And it didn't take long to find victory lane at CRA's home track of Ascot Park in Gardena (Calif.) that year, as he took his first win there on April 27.

By the end of the 1970's, Dean developed a reputation as a smooth racer who seldom wrecked. And he slowly but surely started adding four to six wins per year at the Agajanian family's famed Ascot Park half-mile track to his resume against stiff competition from Jimmy Oskie, Rick Goudy, Mike Shaw, Bob East, Buster Venard and others. The climax came in 1979 when Dean won both a CRA/NARC (Northern Auto Racing Club) Civil War Series event and the prestigious Pacific Coast Classic at Ascot. At the Pacific Coast Open, Dean beat Ron Shuman, Gary

Patterson, Venard, Lealand McSpadden and Oskie. In addition, Thompson had gathered CRA wins aboard the Bromme car as venues such as El Centro, Cajon and Chula Vista, although those wins did not come nearly as frequent as did those at Ascot. He also tried his hand at the Knoxville (Iowa) Nationals in 1979, although he did not meet with much success.

In 1980, Norman "Bubby" Jones came out to the West Coast and he quickly found a ride in the Kazarian family's Gas Chem Special. However, Thompson and the Brommes's stepped up their program and

they won 15 features that season at Ascot, including the Pacific Coast Classic over McSpadden, Jones, Billy Shuman, Jeff Swindell and Doug Wolfgang.

They also won three more shows at Chula Vista and they claimed their first CRA point championship together. Thompson also finished sixth that year at the Western World Championship at Manzanita. Said Jones later, "Different - that's the only way to describe Ascot. Totally different. Anybody who thinks he could've come in there and made a good living beatin' Dean Thompson and others like him would only have been kidding themselves. I had a lot to learn."

In 1981, they won 14 more mains at Ascot, including the Don Peabody Classic, and two more at Chula Vista to take their second consecutive CRA crown. "Bubby" Jones lamented after one of his classic battles with Dean Thompson about "chasing that little red sucker."

And, in 1982, Dean Thompson won another 12 feature events at Ascot, including another Pacific Coast Classic over Steve Kinser, McSpadden, Jimmy Sills, Ron Shuman, Jones and Rip Williams. Thompson also clinched his third CRA Championship in a row with individual wins at Santa Maria and Chula Vista. According to sprint car champion Steve Kinser, "Ascot's a funny track, a back-it-in track, and it's got those tight corners and a heavy cushion. Even without a wing you hook up so tight that when you hit that

cushion it feels like you're hitting a curb. But Dean Thompson has his car set up for it. When he's running good and you're chasing him, you can't even take a breath without losing half a second. The other thing about Dean is that, like all Californians, he parties hard. Last October when he beat me in the Pacific Coast Nationals, he was running 19-second lap times. Well, at a party afterwards, he got talking about it all over again, and he got cranking so good he got down to 18-second lap times."

The first half of the 1980's featured classic side-by-side battles at Ascot between Thompson in the Ron Shaver-powered Bromme "Red Devil" car and Jones in the Shaver-powered, BJI-chassis Gas Chem machine. In 1983, and '84, when Jones won the CRA point titles, glass glazier Thompson continued his winning ways with 23 more Ascot triumphs, including another CRA/NARC Civil War Series show, and one win at Bakersfield. In '83, at the Western World, "Deano" again finished sixth aboard the ALS Industries/Streaker Wheels/Rakar/Goodyear-sponsored car. And, in 1985, the Carson resident bagged 13 more wins at Ascot, including both the Don Peabody Classic and Pacific Coast Open. His Pacific Coast victory came over Jeff Heywood, Jones, Dave Blaney, Williams and McSpadden. He also won twice at Santa Maria, and his first-ever at Manzanita, enroute to a fourth place ranking in CRA points. And Dean Thompson retired having said, "I've done everything I wanted to do in racing."

According to the California Racing Association yearbook, for 1960 through '90. Dean led all CRA drivers with 103 victories, followed by his friend "Bubby" with 79. Those statistics, though, do not include their "open" show victories at Ascot Park. He also led all drivers during that period with 106 CRA fast time awards. And, in the battle for CRA trophy dash wins, he was listed second to multi-time CRA champion Jimmy Oskie, 56-53.



Dean Thompson

(Dan & Vickie Mahony)

Following the demise of the CRA, Dean Thompson came back to race with the new Sprint Car Racing Association (SCRA) in 1995 for six races with car owner Danny Pivovarov. Thompson showed he still had the "right stuff" when he won the Passing Masters Dash at Santa Maria on June 24th.

Today, the divorced Thompson spends most of his time at the 55-year-old Thompson Glass Specialty business.