

NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

W.H. "STUBBY" STUBBLEFIELD

William Hartwell "Stubby" Stubblefield of South Gate (Calif.) invaded the Ascot Speedway in late 1927, along with such other young lions as Jack Buxton, Mel Kenealy, Arvol Brummier, Kelly Petillo and Al Gordon. They were challenging Art Pillsbury's American Automobile Association (AAA) veterans such as Charles Gelston, Ernie Triplett, Francis Quinn and George Souders on the tough Pacific Southwest tour, which included California stops at Bakersfield, San Jose, El Centro and Ascot, and Arizona venues in Phoenix and Tucson.

The 1928 AAA Pacific Southwest championship was earned by racer-turned-artist Jack Buxton in the "Charley Bobby Special". Petillo drove the "Triflex Spl." Fronty Ford, Triplett was in Barney Kleopfer's "Barney Spl." Fronty, Kenealy piloted Harry Hooker's supercharged Model-T, Quinn was in the Cecil Ballanger "Rajo Spl." Ford and Arvol Brummier raced the "Up-Cyl Oil Special" before taking over the "Piston Ring Shop Spl." Miller.

In 1929, Stubblefield raced several cars, including Russell Garnant's "Simplex Piston Ring Special", Eddie Meyer's "Redlands Spl." Fronty Ford, Floyd W. Bobzein's "Fratella Special" and the "Waco Special". Triplett wheeled Kleopfer's "Barney Special", Quinn drove the "Dayton Thoroughbred Spl." Fronty Ford, Bob Scovell had the "Rajo Special", yet Mel Kenealy bested all and won the Pacific Southwest title after getting out of the "Hooker Special" and getting into the Vai Brothers "Padre Special".

In 1930, the prestigious title went to Quinn in the Russell Garnant "Gabhart Special", a car in which he took over when regular driver Jimmy Sharp was injured in it at Bakersfield (Sharp was killed soon thereafter at Oakland driving for Art Sparks and Paul Weirick). The year's 'big six' at the American Legion Speedway were Triplett in the "Barney Special", Quinn, Walt May in the "Dayton Thoroughbred Special", Sharp, "the Whittier Sheik" Brummier in the "Piston Ring Shop Spl." Miller and Stubblefield in Paul Weirick's "Cragar Special". Defending coast champ Kenealy in the Vai Brothers' Miller was surprisingly a non-threat. Other challengers included Wilbur Shaw in the Johnny Vance (Sr.) "Red Pete" car and Pacific Northwestern star Swede Smith in Lloyd Vieux's "Vieux Special". Quinn won the point title over Kenealy, May, arch-rival Triplett, Shaw, Stubblefield, Smith, Brummier, Herman Schurch and William "Shorty" Cantlon.

1930 was the year that Stubby, Shaw, Quinn, Triplett and Stapp all participated in the filming of "The Crowd Roars" with James Cagney and Joan Blondell. And on September 1, 1930, Stubblefield made his lone board track appearance at Altoona (Penna.) Speedway in the "Bugs" Allen-owned Miller.

By the winter of 1930-31, the Fronty Fords at the Legion were quickly being replaced by the more powerful and more expensive Harry A. Miller machines. Art Sparks and Paul Weirick bought a Miller 220 c.i. engine for \$2,750 and replaced the Cragar in their Ascot car, ably driven by Stubblefield. William S. "Bill" White bought the same powerplant for his Triplett-driven "Red Lion Special".

In 1931, W.H. "Stubby" Stubblefield qualified for his first Indianapolis 500, starting ninth and finishing eighth in the Milton Jones-owned Miller. Ernie Triplett captured the Pacific Southwest title driving for Bill White and capturing many of Fred J. "Pop" Wagner's checkered flags at Oakland, Ascot, El Centro, Bakersfield, San Jose and Phoenix. The 'big six' that year at the American Legion Speedway were Triplett, Brummier in the "Piston Ring Shop Spl." Miller, "Wild Bill" Cummings in the old-style "Front Special", Chet Gardner in the 8-cylinder "Miller Special", Lester Spangler in the "Montrose Special" and Stubblefield, who was wheeling Clarence Tarbet's "Cragar Special". Chet Gardner and Stubby finished second and third in points to Triplett, respectively. Defending champion Quinn, the "Bald Eagle", was beset with problems all season in his new \$6,000 "Francis Quinn Spl." number 1 Miller Marine. Sadly, Quinn perished in a highway accident while returning from an Oakland rain-out on December 13th.

The following year, Stubby went 147.355 mph at the Muroc Dry Lakes in the Sparks/Weirick "Gilmore Special", funded by Earl B. Gilmore. At Indy the next month, he started 25th and finished 14th in same car, also known as "the Catfish". And a week after Indy, he won a hundred-mile event at the Roby Speedway in Hammond (Ind.). "The Blond Terror" Triplett became the first repeat titlist as he snared the coveted AAA title again in '32. Stubby had vacated the "Cragar Special" that year for the "Pop Green

Special" and then the "Mallory Special", both race cars from the Midwest, and finished fifteenth in points.

In 1933, Stubby started tenth at Indy and finished fifth for Phil Shafer. The Pacific Coast AAA champions were Al Gordon in the Sparks & Weirick "Poison Lil" car in class 'A' and Swede Smith in class 'B' over Ted Horn. Finishing behind Gordon in class 'A' points were Rex Mays, Triplett, Petillo, Garner, Kenealy, Herb Balmer, Carl Ryder, Shaw, Stapp and Stubblefield in the Earl Haskell "Gilmore Lion Cub Special".

On February 18, 1934, Stubblefield won the AAA-sanctioned "Gilmore Gold Cup" road race at the Mine's Field track in Inglewood (Calif.), which is the current site of Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). The 250-mile event was promoted by Bill Pickens and Stubby won \$1,350. He was followed across the line by Al Gordon, Peter DePaolo and Louis Meyer. Stubby raced similar special stock car events in April at Legion Ascot ("Targo Florio") and in May at Oakland. It was at Oakland where Stubby, who drove the only roofed car in competition, threw down his goggles and crash helmet to the ground and said, "Who in the heck ever heard of a driver wearing such gear in a coupe? I might as well wrap a couple of pillows around my head. Or maybe a mattress!"

Later in May of '34, at Indy, he started 29th and finished 12th for the Cummins Engine Company. At Legion Ascot Speedway, the gold-toothed Stubblefield became the first driver ever killed during a qualification attempt at the Brickyard when he and his riding mechanic, Leo Whitacker, ramped the southwest wall on a time trial run and both were killed. He was survived by his wife Dorothy and his daughter Patricia.



W.H. "Stubby" Stubblefield

(Bruce Craig Photos)