

NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

KARL KINSER

Karl Eugene Kinser was born June 1, 1938. He was one of four boys (Mickey, Karl, Larry, Terry) and one girl (Brenda) for parents Lois and Kenneth Kinser.

Growing up amongst the lush timber forests and rock quarries of south central Indiana, it was only natural for Karl to live in a log cabin and work in a sawmill. It is also fitting that his one-room grade school was located near where the Bloomington Speedway now stands. Following high school graduation in 1955, he went to work for RCA in Bloomington.

During the mid- to late Fifties, Karl began tinkering with cars, even building his own Model A roadster. At the same time he began racing with his buddies at night. That eventually turned into a real sport for Karl (the driver) and his brothers. They campaigned successfully in the tri-state area against competition like "Ohio George" Montgomery.

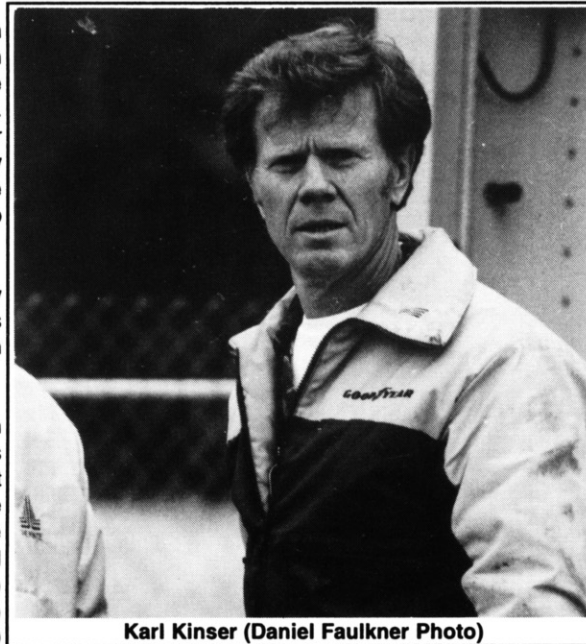
On May 14, 1960, Karl married Kentucky native Diane Silvers and within four years they had a daughter Karla and a son Mark.

In 1965, the Kinser brothers bought an old CAE sprint car and hired Oolitic's Larry Miller as their driver. In their first race ever together, they beat Audie Swartz for the win at Bloomington. The team was quite successful locally and they won two track titles at Paragon (Ind.) and three-in-a-row at Hauptstadt (Ind.) between 1965 and 1969, and over 100 wins.

According to Karl, "I first went to Knoxville (Raceway in Iowa) in 1966 with Larry Miller as my driver. We never made the race, as a matter of fact." In 1967, they raced an old Ennis "Dizz" Wilson machine, but a year later the mechanically-talented Kinser designed his own sprint car, numbered 22.

Beginning in 1970, with Dick Gaines as his driver, Karl Kinser started making his mark as an owner/mechanic/builder on a regional and national level. The team was winning many championship races at places like Indianapolis Raceway Park, Earl Baltes' Eldora, Salem, Winchester, Lima, Wayne County and Kokomo.

They also won the "Little 500" at Anderson (Ind.) twice, in 1973 and 1976. And in 1974, Dick Gaines and Karl Kinser won the 'Granddaddy of them all,' the Knoxville Nationals, by beating Jan Opperman in the last



Karl Kinser (Daniel Faulkner Photo)

turn on the last lap to take the coveted victory in front of 11,000 screaming fans.

From 1970 until Gaines got hurt in 1977 at Champaign (Ill.) aboard Karl's ultra-lightweight sprinter, the Kinser brothers team was extremely versatile. They ran and won on dirt and pavement tracks with up to three cars at

any one time, with such teammates to Gaines as Butch Wilkerson, Calvin Gilstrap, Ron Fisher, Bobby Kinser and Sheldon Kinser. When the second car (numbered eleven; half the original number 22) was given up, the number 11 was retained because "it was easier to paint the numbers on the tail."

Following the Gaines injury, Karl's second cousin Steve, just 22 years old at the time, was given the opportunity to pilot the Kinser brothers number 11 sprinter. The rest is history:

World of Outlaws (WoO) point championships: 1978, 1979, 1980, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993.

United Sprint Association (USA) point championships: 1988, 1989.

Knoxville Nationals: 1980, 1981, 1982, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1991, 1992, 1993.

West Capital/Chico Gold Cup Race of Champions: 1978, 1979, 1983, 1984, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1990, 1992.

Williams Grove National Open: 1990, 1992.

Syracuse SuperNationals: 1980, 1986, 1988, 1992.

Eldora Kings Royal: 1984, 1988, 1991.

Manzanita Western World Championship: 1982, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1990.

Ascot Park Pacific Coast Open: 1987, 1988.

Incredibly, even the above list of major race wins and point championships doesn't tell the whole story regarding Karl's (and Steve's) success from 1978 until today in sprint car racing. Wings, wingless, dirt, asphalt, indoors, outdoors, bullrings, mile tracks, \$2,000-to-win, \$70,000-to-win, U.S.A., Canada, Mexico,

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Australia. They've not only done them all ... they've won at them all!

According to Doug Wolfgang in 1984, one decade ago, "Karl is absolutely at his peak as a sprint mechanic. For every race he and Steve work together, the further behind they leave the rest of us."

Today, Karl Kinser continues to own and mechanic his Valvoline Maxim sprint car number 11 for driver Steve Kinser on Ted

Johnson's Copenhagen/Skoal World of Outlaws trail, criss-crossing the country non-stop like he's done for the last 16 years. He continues to build the motors and design the chassis, look for new technical innovations (like his slider clutch in '71, his aluminum/titanium parts, his plastic fuel tank, his hydraulically-operated top wing), and help his son Mark's team when he has the time. He continues to restore antique passenger cars as a hobby, and he and his wife Diane continue to live in a log cabin (built entirely by Karl) in Oolitic, just 15 minutes west of Bloomington.

And Karl Kinser continues to lead the 1994 World of Outlaws (WoO) owners point standings as this program goes to press.

As Joe Scalzo once wrote, "Labeling him a compulsive, inexhaustible worker trivializes him."