



Paul Arch Photo

# Kramer Williamson

by Bryan Householder

Pennsylvanian Kramer Williamson's career actually began at a young age in go-kart racing, but by the time he was junior in high school, Kramer was ready for the real thing. The year was 1968, and the Williamson family purchased a used super sportsman racer from Bob Highlands. It was a car that had been driven by a man named "Boots" Podjed.

At the time, the sportsman cars were just one step below the full sprint cars in the Pennsylvania area, and they

raced regularly at the Silver Spring Speedway, on the other side of town from the more famous Williams Grove Speedway in Mechanicsburg. That's where Kramer began his driving career.

At the time Williamson had a Mustang street car painted in a color known as dusty rose. To most folks, that would have been a pale pink. They painted the race car the same color and, thus began the exploits of Kramer Williamson and the "Pink Panther." Williamson chose his number 73 because it followed 72, which was the number of his friend Len "Mugs" Maguire, a sportsman racer at the time.

The first year with the sportsman car was a learning experience, but a successful one. While Kramer didn't win a race his first year, he showed great promise and was named Rookie of the Year at Silver Spring. In 1969, while a senior in high school, Williamson lived up to his promise, earning four wins at Silver Spring and the track championship. He spent one more year in the sportsman car, winning three more races at Silver Spring and three at Susquehanna.

It was 1971 when Kramer Williamson and the "Pink Panther" moved to the full sprint car ranks. Mechanical wizard Davey Brown, Sr., worked with him to build a new sprint car, and that first year was one to remember. Fast from the start, Williamson scored his first sprint car win at Susquehanna in just his seventh race. By the end of the season he was named Rookie of the Year at Williams Grove, Port Royal and Susquehanna.

Over the next ten years there were a host of famous car owners, and many feature wins as Williamson became one of the top drivers on the tough Pennsylvania circuit. He won regularly at Williams Grove and Selinsgrove, and threw in some wins at all the other area tracks as well. Lincoln, Port Royal, Susquehanna, Hagerstown, Penn National and Reading all were added to his win list.

He nabbed track titles at Williams Grove in 1976 and '78, at Selinsgrove in 1978 and the overall title on Jack Gunn's Keystone Auto Racing Speedways (KARS) circuit in 1976 and '78. And at the end of the '78 season, the famed Williams Grove National Open fell to Williamson as well.

The list of Kramer's car owners over this period reads like a history of Pennsylvania sprint car racing as well. There were stints for "Bud" Grimm, Al Hamilton, Bob Weikert, Trim Gunnells, Maynard Boop, Bob Benchoff, Joe Harz, Ed Kolwoski and others.

Most of Williamson's time was spent in Pennsylvania, but his teams did find some time to travel as well. In Florida, Williamson won at the old Tampa Fairgrounds and at East Bay; in Ohio, wins came at Eldora, Atomic, Wayne County, and Skyline. There were also wins at Syracuse, New York, and Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

Several of Williamson's win during this period were against the World of Outlaws (WoO), making him an original member of the Pennsylvania Posse. One of those WoO wins came while driving for car owner Harry Kuhn, a colorful older man who had never before won a sprint car race. For good measure, Kramer sprinkled in a few midget car wins.

By the time the early 1980's rolled around, Williamson decided to do a bit more traveling. He found some good rides in the United States Auto Club (USAC) Silver Crown Series, with owners like Mauri Amerling and Ken Schrader. Although he never won a Silver Crown race, there were numerous second and third place finishes to add to his career stats.

By this time Williamson's family had arrived, the good rides in Pennsylvania weren't as readily available. His last 'open' sprint car win in Pennsylvania came at Williams Grove in 1983, but he was about to embark on yet another phase of his remarkable career.

After 77 wins in the full sprint cars, Williamson moved to the United Racing Club (URC) ranks in the mid-1980s, and started a whole other streak of career race stats. At the time URC was using a 366-cubic-inch engine, and would later move to the nationally standard '360' engines.

Williamson actually scored his first URC win at Penn National in 1980. Since that time, with car owners like Joe Fiore, Vince Gangami, Fran Hogue, Henry Fenimore, and with his own "Pink Panther," Kramer Williamson has continued his winning ways. He currently ranks third on the all time URC win list with 66 victories. He has won the URC point title three times, 1991, '92, and '95.

While racing with URC he added wins at Granby and Drummondville in the province of Quebec, Canada. He has also traveled to Australia with famed car builder/owner Bob Trostle, where he has won twice, which means Williamson has won sprint car races in three different countries.

It's been a long and colorful career in sprint car racing for Kramer Williamson, and it's not over yet. He plans to race with the United Racing Company (URC) in 2008 with his own car. His sponsor Armourboard has also purchased a '410' engine, and his plans are to race some special shows at Williams Grove this season as well.

Williamson is an all-around racer. He builds his own race cars from the ground up. Over the years he's built a number of other cars, including many very successful super sportsman cars for others. He still repairs race car frames for other racers on a regular basis.

Williamson says his long and colorful career has allowed him to meet so many nice people. But, he credits much of his racing success to his family. "If it weren't for my parents I never would have been able to do this, they were always big supporters of my racing."

He met his wife Sharon at the races; she was a scorer at Jack Gunn's race tracks when Kramer first started racing there. They have two children. His son Kurt is a Mechanical Engineering graduate of Penn State who now works as a shock specialist for Petty Enterprises, and his daughter Felicia will graduate from Penn State this year with a degree in Hospital Policy Administration.

Through his son, Williamson has had the honor of standing with Richard Petty and the Petty Gang at NASCAR races. One of the team members passed along the fact that he remembered watching Williamson race the "Pink Panther" one night at Port Royal. While at the NASCAR race, a guy stopped by who remembered a winter spent racing with Kramer Williamson in Australia. His name was Jeff Gordon.

