



# Chuck Hulse



Photo Credit: Jim Chini

by Norm Bogan

Born in South Gate, California, on October 3, 1927, Chuck Hulse resided in nearby Lynwood as a youngster. He joined two older brothers and a younger sister in living there, when much of that area was still agricultural with a number of farms and dairies. By the age of eight, Hulse became proficient at driving a Model-T and spending time in action on the rural roads and dirt paths adjacent to the fields.

Entering the service after high school, in February of 1945, Chuck was shipped off to Okinawa. Arriving a week after the Japanese surrender, Hulse was reassigned to the Army Air Corps, serving in Tucson, Arizona, England and Germany until being discharged in 1949.

Returning to California, Hulse became employed with the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company as an instrument technician, responsible for maintaining all the electronic equipment used to process rubber into tires for the post-war auto industry. He and his wife Betty settled in Downey and added two sons into the family, Leland and Chuck Jr.

Soon the latent urges from those earlier Model-T exploits erupted and Chuck fitted into a jalopy in 1949 at Lincoln Park in East L.A. When the race car flipped over, it was up-righted and he finished fourth. Chuck ran midjets at Balboa Stadium and Culver City in 1950 and '51. Advancing to the track roadsters in 1952, he raced the Robinson & Zabel DeSoto at Western Speedway and took Clem Tebow's Ardun to his first roadster win at Carrell Speedway. With the California Roadster Association (CRA) transitioning to the California Racing Association (CRA) in 1955/56, Chuck was one of the drivers that easily adjusted to the new configuration. But, he didn't have a regular ride and raced on a limited schedule, driving for several car owners like Robinson/Zabel, Clem Tebow, and Hank Blum, while accumulating several feature victories and top ten in points.

On May 25, 1956 CRA ran a 25-mile race at the Willow Springs Road Course. Hulse drove the Hank Blum car, set a new track record qualifying nearly two seconds ahead of the second fastest car. Winning the race by nearly half a lap, Chuck was penalized for a jump start and relegated to second place. In 1956, Hulse obtained a United States Auto Club (USAC) competition license and entered the Pike's Peak Hill Climb, with an eighth place finish as his reward.

The first race of 1957 was a 100-mile road race at Hourglass Field in Carlsbad, California. Driving the Robinson/Zabel DeSoto, Hulse won the race, lapping the field. Suspended and fined by the USAC director of competition for racing in a CRA event and without a ride during the lengthy appeals process, Hulse still tied for seventh in CRA season points after missing much of the '57 season. In 1958 L.A. Raceway (Ascot) was in financial straits and closed down to reorganize, so CRA shifted their programs to Manzanita Speedway in Phoenix, Arizona. Chuck's commitment to his family and employer kept him close to home and away from a regular ride.

Ascot reopened for the '59 season with a schedule of 43 races on tap. Parnelli Jones was running away with the season points while Hulse missed the first 2-1/2 months of the season without a ride. Hank Blum brought his old GMC sprinter out in late April for Chuck to drive in two races and Hulse captured both programs in spectacular fashion. During this time, Roger McCluskey was building a new 220-cubic-inch Offy-powered race car for the Morales brothers and they selected Hulse to make it competitive.

A Memorial Day show at the 1-1/4-mile banked pavement track at Vacaville was the first outing for this new partnership. This Monza-style event consisted of three 50-mile legs. Chuck finished second, first and fifth to win the overall title against drivers from CRA, Northern California, Arizona and a number of the "pavement aces."

Hulse and the "Tamale Wagon" made history for the next three months. In nine weeks, they scored nine race victories: Vacaville, Phoenix, Tucson and six at Ascot. In September CRA went to Capital Speedway in Sacramento where Chuck and Sonny Pratt had a fierce battle during the feature, swapping the lead back and forth. Hulse tagged the wall, blowing the right front tire, racing the final two laps on three wheels, to a second place finish in one of the year's wildest races.

The season ended with a showdown between the top two in points, with twin 50-lap events. Chuck captured both legs and won the championship, accumulating nearly twice the points of second place. Hulse's 1959 season ranks as one of the most dominant CRA seasons on record and that included missing nearly the first quarter of the year. Consistently running strong, Chuck claimed 13 of the 43-race schedule.

**Hulse and the "Tamale Wagon" made history for the next three months. In nine weeks, they scored nine race victories: Vacaville, Phoenix, Tucson and six at Ascot.**

In 1960, Chuck embarked on a USAC career, running the USAC national sprint car series from 1960 until '64. His best year was 1963, when he entered 18 races and won at New Bremen, Ohio, and scored fourth in national points. After finishing in the top ten in points in 1961, '62 and '63, a devastating crash at New Bremen in 1964 caused Chuck to miss nearly two seasons with difficulty focusing his eyes. This spurred Hulse to retire from the sprint cars.

Passing the Indy 500 driver's test, Hulse ran five championship events during 1960 and finished 33rd in points, while missing the "500". Hulse attempted the Speedway again in 1961 and '68, but he did not qualify. He made the starting grid in 1962, '63, '66 and '67, with his best finish being seventh in 1967 after starting 27th in the field.

Competing in 60 championship car events from 1958 through '68, Chuck scored best finishes of second (twice), third (three times), fourth (three times) and fifth (three times).

After his retirement, Chuck earned a real estate license and acquired a number of rental homes and a medical office building in his portfolio.

Beloved wife and mother Betty "B.J." Hulse passed away in July of 1997. Chuck is now enjoying life in La Palma, California, with his wife Danna, whom he married in 2002.

**MORRIS ROOFING**  
 Jeremy Morris • Owner  
 Knoxville  
 jmorrisroofing@yahoo.com  
 515-975-1472

**Karizma Salon**  
 YOUR COLOR SPECIALISTS  
 621 N. Lincoln • Knoxville  
 641-842-7300

**Quality Racing Products, LLC**  
 JIM DARNELL, OWNER  
 KNOXVILLE  
 641-891-1603

**RAMAEKER SCREEN PRINTING**  
 Embroidery • Promotional Products • Wide Format Full Color Printing  
 Posters • Banners • Yard Signs • T-Shirts • Hats  
 1420 110th Pl. • Knoxville  
 641-842-4706 • 641-891-5057 • ramaeker@iowatelecom.net