

national sprint car hall of fame



steve Beitler

by Kaleb Hart

From the small town of Sedro Woolley, Washington, Steve Beitler forged a path that has led him to the pinnacle of his career, an induction into the 2018 class of the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame.

Born on February 24th, 1959, Beitler traveled a unique and eclectic road, from a racer know as "Stormin' Steve" to speed shop owner and now, award winning track promoter and Hall of Fame inductee.

One of the more ambitious and goal driven people you'll ever meet, Steve has often spoke of goal setting in his youth as a backbone to what he's accomplished as an adult. "When I was a kid growing up, I wanted three things: I wanted to be a firefighter, play in a rock and roll band, and drive race cars," is an oft-quoted quip from the Sedro Woolley High School Class of 1977 graduate. He was a star in football and baseball. His dreams of rock and roll and firefighting would come about in due time, but it was at age 18 where Steve began work on his first race car, a home built Supermodified for competition at his home track of Skagit Speedway, where his father Harold had built a Hall of Fame reputation.

Aside from being one of the original racers back at the track in 1954, Harold was a master of all trades behind the scenes including official, photographer, flagman and announcer/P.R. man. Steve fielded his first car at the track in 1977, using the number 18 to match his age. A huge AJ Foyt fan, Beitler originally wanted the number 14, but it had been registered - it would be a few years before he'd move to the number 21 which would soon be seen throughout the country.

Steve's early racing career saw him stay home from 1977-1980, contesting races at Skagit Speedway before moving to a more broad regional schedule in 1981 that spanned Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho and Montana as well as Western Canada. He picked up a handful of wins as he grew his team and his dream - a shot at the World of Outlaws. He took his first shot at the Outlaws in 1989 and he finished 13th in points in 40 races with the series. From 1989 through 1994, Steve raced 325 World of Outlaws events with his highlight

being a seventh place finish in points in 1993. Never considered a high dollar team, Beitler would often say "We may be out-dollared, but no one will ever out-work us."

Beitler moved to a more regional schedule from 1995-1997, running 32 races at Knoxville Raceway and collecting four podium finishes along the way. Over his career he would pick up wins across the country in non-sanctioned action two times at Skagit Speedway in Alger, Washington, Cottage Grove Speedway in Oregon, Bethany, Missouri, I-55 Speedway in Pevely, Missouri, Huset's Speedway in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Hamilton County Speedway in Webster, City, Iowa, Jacksonville Speedway in Illinois, 34 Raceway in West Burlington, Iowa and Ohio Valley Speedway in Parkersburg, West Virginia along the way before hanging up his helmet at the conclusion of 1997.

Upon returning home to Washington, Steve opened Beitler Performance Center in Burlington and used his knowledge from years on the road to grow a speed shop that would become the Northwest's premier open wheel parts store. In 2001, Beitler had the opportunity to purchase his home track of Skagit Speedway, and along with his partner Jim Cress, jumped at the chance to save the historical speedway. Funtime Promotions was formed with Steve at the helm, assuming control of the Speedway toward the tail end of the season. This was the completion of a dream - he now ran the place where he sold programs as a kid. Early on in his tenure, Steve sought to return the name of Skagit Speedway to national prominence, beginning with capital improvements to the track including new lighting, scoreboards, walls and signage. Crowds, cars and press would return rapidly as Skagit Speedway came back to being a place synonymous with Sprint Car racing again, hosting celebrity nights featuring Kasey Kahne and Tony Stewart, bringing the World of Outlaws back to the track for the first time in over a decade and bolstering the annual Jim Raper Memorial Dirt Cup back to national prominence, including paying a top prize of \$40,000 to Jonathan Allard, who won the 40th annual edition of the race in 2011.



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Steve and Funtime Promotions expanded their promoting footprint to include the Summer Thunder Sprint Car Series in 2013, which sanctions 360 Sprint Car action at four different tracks in Washington and Oregon. In 2014, Beitler took over promotion of Grays Harbor Raceway in Elma, Washington, and added the Washington Modified Tour in 2015, sanctioning races at four tracks in Washington as well as Oregon. 2015 also saw sanctioning from the Lucas Oil American Sprint Car Series at the Jim Raper Memorial Dirt Cup, making Skagit Speedway just one of a handful of tracks in the country that both the Outlaws and ASCS travel to on a yearly basis.

Steve is quick to credit his team for his success, which includes five regional promoter of the year honors as well as the 2017 Racing Promoters Monthly National Promoter of the Year Award. "Nothing I've accomplished would be possible without my office manager Kandy Jager and my best friend since 4th grade, Mark Harrison. They've been part of my racing life from the very beginning, including running up and down the road, and they make up the backbone of a great team we've put together here in the Pacific Northwest."

With numerous honors already on his resume, Beitler aims to continue pushing Funtime Promotions to new heights. "What gets me most excited these days is being able to provide a little slice of old time Americana for families, where parents can bring their kids to a safe place and enjoy a great night of affordable family entertainment," said Steve.

While his induction into the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame is the ultimate honor in our sport, it will not stop Beitler from continuing to advance Sprint Car Racing for years to come in the Pacific Northwest.