



national sprint car hall of fame

KNOXVILLE, IOWA

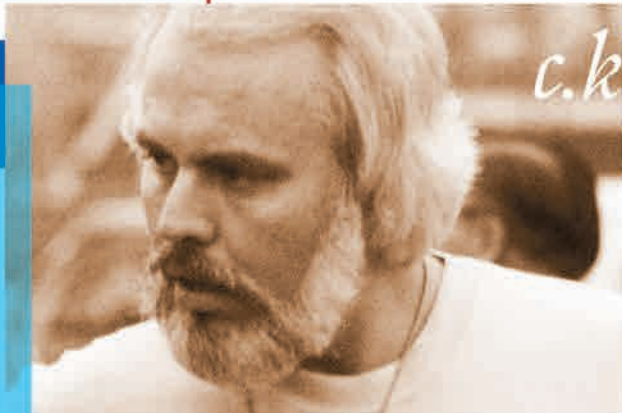


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Spurlock

by Vahok Hill

C.K. Spurlock, Jr. was born October 24, 1940. While he may have been out of the sport's headlines for the last two decades, his impact on the sport during the decades of the 1980's and 1990's cannot be understated. He was absolutely one of the most powerful, influential men in the sport. He was a true pioneer from the prospective of racer, car owner, team owner, chassis innovator and influential chassis builder.

Starting in the middle 1960's, it all began for Spurlock racing Sprint Cars built by Don Edmunds in the Ohio and West Virginia area. He never lost his love of the sport even after moving to the Nashville area and becoming a high-profile manager/mover-and-shaker in the Country Music world. Despite his multi-year exit from racing Sprint Cars, he eventually returned to the sport and brought the Country Music world with him.

Through his involvement in the Country Music business, he was able to gain some sponsorship from some of Country Music's heavyweights. The Loretta Lynn Special was campaigned by his team and driven by Dub May. Again, through his contacts in the Country Music industry, where he was a long-time manager for Kenny Rogers near the height of Rogers' fame, he was integral in forming the Kenny Rogers Team.

His team was one of the initial group of racers that made up the World of Outlaws traveling teams in the very early years.

During this time, like much of the rest of the country, the team was utilizing Trostle Chassis. It was during the traveling period that C.K. decided it was time to start building their own chassis. At first, it was just going to be an in-house effort and they would only be building cars for their team. That changed quickly as others noticed that the cars were well made and had many innovations that made the car safer. They also offered replacement parts that actually fit the cars without requiring reworks to get them to work. And, most importantly for the racers, they were fast cars. At this point in time, Gambler Chassis was born, taking their name from a popular Kenny Rogers hit song. They quickly built a nationwide network of dealers selling the chassis and parts.

C.K. was an integral part of the Gambler Chassis operation, design, material selection, fabrication and marketing of the chassis. This was all accomplished while he was heavily involved with the touring schedule and concert promotion for Kenny Rogers. Legend has it that the highly successful 1985 chassis was designed at a truck stop, while on tour with Kenny Rogers, on a napkin.

For all of the success of the chassis it seemed that profit was not his main motivator. It seemed his true "profit" was the success of the chassis and that of the drivers who were campaigning the car. It was about providing the safest and fastest Sprint Car to the racer. Gambler changed the game for many chassis builders at the time by providing a steady stream of parts, waiting on the shelves ready to support the traveling and local racer. This kept many a racer racing and not wanting for a part to be made so they could go racing. Another positive was that there were no special cars for special drivers. The local racer could buy the same chassis that Doug Wolfgang, Danny Smith, Brad Doty, Steve Kinser, and Sammy Swindell were racing and winning with across the nation. It seemed that, at one time or another, the biggest names in the Sprint Car world were driving a Gambler Sprint Car.

C.K. Spurlock and Gambler were pivotal in design, product management and innovation in chassis manufacturing. Many of the cars on the track today have been influenced by Gambler Chassis and ultimately by C.K. Spurlock. He has also influenced the way many teams go about the business of Sprint Car racing.

C.K. served as president of the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame & Museum Board from 1989-1991, and was a key cog in its early years.