



by Patrick Wigans

STEVE CHASSEY

DRIVER

Steve Chassey was born on February 27, 1945, in Brockton, Massachusetts. His father drove race cars but quit racing when he started his family. Still, Steve would grow up attending races with his parents and at the age of 17, after going to Saugus Speedway in Santa Clarita, California, he was fully bitten by the racing bug. Soon he would build a '49 Olds stock car and begin his racing career.

Steve's career took a brief intermission while he served in the United States Army in Vietnam, where he was awarded the Soldier's Medal. Upon his return, he was determined to be a race car driver. In 1969, Steve got behind the wheel of a sprint car that his father owned and would win Rookie of the Year honors with the California Racing Association (CRA). While racing with the CRA, he won at the famous Ascot Park race track in Gardena, California, in 1970 as well as winning at Corona Raceway in Corona, California in 1971.

Steve eventually moved to Indianapolis where he was able to display his skills on a

national tour level, racing with the United States Auto Club (USAC). His first USAC win came in the sprint car in 1978. For the 1979 USAC sprint car season, Steve got behind the wheel of the Jet Engineering car known as the Jet Rod. This light weight car had many components that were made from titanium and Steve drove it to its fullest potential, winning seven races and breaking the single lap track records at Dayton Speedway, Salem Speedway, and Winchester Speedway. That same year, Steve and the Jet Rod would make themselves at home at Winchester Speedway, reaching victory lane five times in a row at the high banks. This would tie a series record for most consecutive wins at a single track, and he is still the only one to date to do it in a single season.

In 1980, Steve continued where he left off the previous season-winning five more USAC sprint car races and finishing the season as runner-up in points. This success led to him getting a ride in an Indy car in the CART PPG Indy Car World Series. 1981 would see Chassey get his career best CART finish coming in fifth at Watkins Glen, a race in which he gained fourteen positions. Still, the ultimate goal would be getting a shot at the Indianapolis 500. Steve would make the field of thirty-three cars in 1983 behind the wheel of the number 56 Genesee Beer Wagon for Gohr Racing, qualifying in the nineteenth position. He would go on to finish eleventh, which would be a career high for him at the Brickyard.

During the 1980s, Steve became one of the top contenders in the USAC Silver Crown Series. He earned his first win with the series at the Hoosier Hundred at the Indiana State Fairgrounds in 1984. Chassey would win once more with the series in 1988 at the Tony Bettenhausen 100 at the Illinois State Fairgrounds. Steve earned a career high of fourth in USAC Silver Crown Series points on three separate occasions in 1980, 1984, and 1988. During this same time period, he continued to race in the CART PPG Indy Car World Series and made the Indianapolis 500 two more times in 1987 and 1988. For much of his career, out of necessity, Steve worked as his own mechanic while he was racing, a skill that superbly shone through when he operated as his own chief mechanic in his final Indianapolis 500 in 1988. Not only was he a skilled driver and mechanic, but Steve also took his skills behind the microphone as a commentator and analyst for USAC's "Thursday Night Thunder" television series on ESPN. He would later go on to run a successful motorsports insurance company.

When Chassey's career came to an end, the record books would show thirteen wins and twelve fast qualifying times with the USAC Sprint Car Series; two wins and six fast qualifying times with the USAC Silver Crown Series; two CRA wins, and three starts in the Indianapolis 500.



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