



DRAG RACING HISTORY
TOLD BY THE PEOPLE WHO MADE IT HAPPEN

PROJECT 1320, “Old Black Studebaker” head to Mac Tools/NHRA U.S. Nationals

For Immediate Release

Contact: Traci Hrudka
Quarter Mile Foundation
Phone: 440.888.0088
hrudka@sbcglobal.net (or)

Steve Cole
WRITEWords
Phone: 330.725.5462
scole@4writewords.com

Parma Heights, Ohio (29 July 2010) – The Quarter Mile Foundation, producers of PROJECT 1320, the documentary series about the history of drag racing, announced today it will be participating in the 56th Annual Mac Tools/NHRA U.S. Nationals over the Labor Day weekend, and they will bring with them the iconic “Old Black Studebaker” Gasser car.

“We have been provided a very unique opportunity by the National Hot Rod Association to participate in the nostalgia race car area,” said Traci Hrudka, the Foundation’s Chairman. “We also have been given the opportunity to showcase one of the iconic cars in the sport’s history, Junior Thompson’s re-creation of the 1941 Studebaker ‘Old Black Studebaker’ which ‘The Camfather,’ Ed Iskenderian, claims started the ‘Gasser Wars’ of the late 1950s and early 1960s.”

The nostalgia race car area will provide race fans and competitors the opportunity to see some of the most important cars of the earliest days of the sport, as well as remarkable street rods and muscle cars which were influenced by the race cars of the time.

The appearance of this car at Indy will be the first time it will be seen east of the Mississippi River – ever. The furthest East the original “Old Black Studebaker” travelled was to the U.S. Nationals in Oklahoma City in 1958, where it won the Little Eliminator title.

The “Old Black Studebaker” was meticulously re-created by Sonny Messner under the careful tutelage of JR Thompson. Sonny originally wrenched with the Thompson Brothers, but switched to Garlits with his first sniff of nitro. Hall of Famer Junior (“JR”) Thompson ran the car from 1958 to 1960 every weekend at Southern California tracks like Lions, Pomona and Santa Ana. Purchasing a running Studebaker Messner finished this recreation just in time for the 2008 NHRA 17th Annual California Hot Rod Reunion at Bakersfield, Calif. Is this the original car? Doubtful, but it’s anybody’s guess. JR and Sonny said, “We took the Studie to a scrap yard in L.A. soon after they realized the 4-door sedan was too heavy to compete effectively against the lighter Willys, which gasser greats were starting to use.”

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Since Sonny Messner is busy touring Swamp Rat III and its matching GMC tow truck, so he turned over the reins of touring the “Old Black Studebaker” to the new owners Steve and Stuart Head, of Head Motor Co., Columbia, Mo. The “Head to Head” Brothers are true ‘Mazmanian-style’ promoters. In addition to touring the car they’re creating a die-cast tribute model, T-shirts, hats, posters and a tri-fold flyer. The flyer will be a free handout at every nostalgia meet filling spectators with historic details and photos of this legendary piece of Gasser History. You’ll also see it at the NHRA 19th Annual California Hot Rod Reunion in Bakersfield in October, 2010.

Promoter Don Burdge adds, “Think about this. Prior to the Gasser Wars, there was very little professional showmanship in drag racing. Builders/drivers/owners like Montgomery, Pittman, Mazmanian, Stone, Woods and Cook and JR Thompson as a group created the pizzazz that is racing today.” He adds, “Where would hot rods and customs have been without Barris and Roth? Equally, where would quarter mile racing be today without the fanfare of the Gasser Wars? And, according to Isky, ‘The *Old Black Studebaker* that started the Gasser Wars.’ This car and its heritage is a wonderful addition to the Quarter Mile Foundation and its mind-blowing non-profit production of the historic documentary “Project 1320.”

“We appreciate the support and encouragement we have received from the NHRA, particularly from Eileen Daniels and Glenn Cromwell, who are overseeing the nostalgia area,” said Ms. Hrudka. “We have had strong encouragement from the NHRA and from the Wally Parks NHRA Museum staffs since we began this endeavor.

“NHRA encouraged us to participate at this special area within the Mac Tools/NHRA U.S. Nationals, and we see it as a wonderful opportunity for today’s fans to see the cars and some of the stars who pioneered the sport. It will provide the Foundation a tremendous opportunity to reach out to these fans and inform them about further preserving our history, in the words of the pioneers and legends which helped launch our sport.”

The nostalgia race car area is located outside the *Mac Tools Concourse* on the west side (Spectator Side) grandstands.

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