

BILL FORCE

By raycer 27



I met Bill right after I bought my car from Harry McConnell, Harry said he knew this kid who could letter and number my car, that's when our friendship began.

For those who don't know, Bill has lettered and numbered close to 1200 cars over the years and is still doing cars as we speak.

Bill started into racing at the age of 16; he had the 2, a

1937 Ford sedan that he took to Vineland and Pleasantville. He would work on the car during the week and then get his older friends to tow it to the track.

He has a pretty extensive resume, while improving on his talents as an artist he was also making some extra dollars to help somewhat with the expenses of racing. He had originally started lettering cars when he was 12 years old.



Bill's father, Hank Force (shown in the picture on the left of Ken Butler) was an avid race fan and started the Pit Stop Fan Club and supported Bill in his endeavors to maybe one day drive an Indy car and

maybe a chance to run at the Indianapolis 500. Although the projected goal of Indy didn't materialize though he came real close in 1970, Bill says he still feels very fortunate about the accomplishments in his career. His oldest son said that he may not have fulfilled his goals and dreams of Indy but he's done a whole lot more than most people could've ever dreamed about.



On his climb up the ladder he met some pretty nice people. Being from the general area of P'ville he became friends with Frankie Leeds and one night at P'ville when they were racing, Frank tapped him in the rear and Bill hit the fence. When Bill asked him why he did that Frank replied jokingly "I just wanted to give you some on the job training while you're still young, so you'll know what to expect in the future"!

Modified driver Joe Kelly, also gave Bill some valuable driving tips and they also became life long friends.

There was a driver from Carney's Point by the name of Bill Speakman who kind of took Bill under his wing and taught him things that he had learned from *his* racing experiences.

Bill and his dad figured it would enhance his chances if he took a break from stock cars and got into 3/4 midget racing. So they bought a car, the #26 TQ midget and started off racing at Pine Brook Speedway for about 4 years and also ran in the "Boardwalk Classic" at the Convention Hall in Atlantic City. The picture shown is from 1971. Around that time there were also



opportunities that came up to drive full midgets and sprint cars.

Bill has competed in the ARDC midgets, URC sprints, USAC midgets and has been a competitor at Wall Stadium.

They went to the New York and New England area, tried some super modified racing and basically had a pretty good time running different cars and tracks.

It is a known fact that Ken Butler introduced the modern stock division at P'ville to allow guys to get into racing at a cheaper level and advance to the sportsman class when they felt ready to do so.



Ken Butler petitioned Bill Force and Harry McConnell to build the first modern stock at P'ville as the prototype the guys could view on display at the track. The car was a red 1960 Ford Galaxie that had the same paint scheme as the Ray Hendrick modified cars and it really was a beautiful

race car when they were done with it. The rest is history, the class took off and a lot of local guys built cars for that next season.

Drivers like Enos Garrison, Ralph Broschard, Larry Parker, John LaVance, Gary Voss and Chick Cassaboon all started their careers in the modern Stox . Thanks to Ken Butler, Bill Force and Harry McConnell it was a win, win deal for everyone.



I will be doing a show on the cars that Bill has lettered, it's being put together at the present time, stay tuned!

Bill has lettered many of the cars you will see at the Pumpkin run or at the other vintage car shows you might attend, you'll see a few of the photos in this article.



So if you happen to go to the Pumpkin Run at Fleming's Auto parts or any of the many vintage race car shows in the northeastern part of the US stop by Bill's little art gallery kiosk and check out the artwork on display.

Bill also drives, tests and competes in the vintage race meets, so drop in and say hello to a good guy, a great artist and take home a piece of racing history, whether it's a drawing, a photo of your favorite car, driver or some other form of artwork that might be on display.
