

JACK STETSER
Owner of the “O”, the “Flying Zero” and car #29

by raycer27

Jack Stetser started out racing boats in the late 40’s, the typical prizes for placing in the top 3 were usually a trophy, a seat cushion or maybe a gas can. Then people started racing cars and they were actually paying *money!* It didn’t take Jack long as he put it, to say “Hey this is pretty dumb, racing boats for a seat cushion instead of money, we need to go stock car racing”!

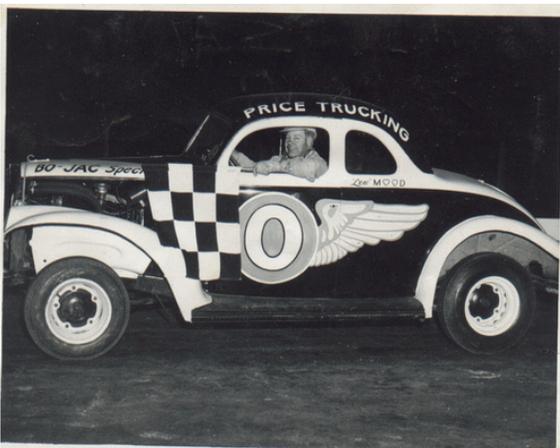
Jack left boat racing and started building his 1st car in 1953 and at the beginning of the season in 1954, he put the new car, the “O” on the track.

Jack drove it and the new car was presenting a few minor problems that Jack couldn’t figure out. A guy walked up to Jack and told him he noticed that the car seemed to be running pretty good, he said it’s ok, but I still have some things that aren’t exactly right. The guy said do you want me to try it out, maybe I can help you; the guys name was Lew Mood. From then on, Lew became Jack’s primary driver for his cars.

So Jack said he was going to run the heat, but probably wouldn’t qualify, Lew said I’ll run it in the consi and qualify it then and he did and won the race. Jack then let him run the feature and Lew turned in a respectable 3rd or 4th place finish. After the race, Lew said “If you want this car to win, I’ll make a deal with you, I’ll supply the carburetor, work on the car, show you some secrets, and you let me drive the car”. Jack said ok, let’s see what happens.

They had a fairly good season, but Lew was pointing out some things that needed to be changed, so Jack built a new car for the next year.

The new car was numbered The Flying Zero (see inset photo) and Lew drove that car a few times, but Jack still wanted to drive and with the help of another friend Bo Price, who also drove,



campaigned the car until Jack's grandfather and Bo's father had a meeting with them and said they would help with money and Price Construction would sponsor the car and would supply the cars, parts or anything they needed. There was a catch to this arrangement, Jack and Charlie could not drive the cars any more because their family felt that it was too dangerous, so Lew Mood became the primary driver.

Jack ran his cars all over the tri-state area. Elton Hildreth and Frankie Schneider also drove his cars. At Wilmington Speedway, Frankie took his car out in the consi and qualified it for the feature and told Jack to follow him in the feature, and he came home in 4th place.

Lew Mood didn't care very much for asphalt, he really preferred dirt, so when they went to Old Bridge Speedway Lew would qualify the car and someone else would drive it in the feature. In 1958, Lew wrecked the Flying Zero at Alcyon Speedway in the last race on the last lap.

Jack and Lew were hooked up with some good people at the time, Jim Tomlin, who had the # OO car with Lew driving. Jim ran the experimental machine shop at Wheaton Glass in Millville and Lew worked there too.

They made and modified a lot of engine parts, "tulip valves", boxed rods for strength, pistons, anything for the engines or cars; they would make them, nowadays everybody buys there stuff over the counter, though I'm sure there are some "old school" mechanics that still make certain parts for their cars.

According to Jack, Lew was a genius when it came to carburetors and was the 1st person in the U.S. to get a Holley 4 barrel carb to run on alcohol.

Jack recalls a time at P'ville when Lew was winning every week and they decided to protest Jack's car. Back then it was a \$100.00 to protest each car, so Jack asked the official, as to how many cars were there and he said about 24 cars, so Jack protested every car there at \$100 a pop. The rule was if the car was illegal that you protested, you got your protest money



back. They were still tearing cars down early Sunday morning and when the last car had been checked, Jack got back more than half the money he put up and Jack's car was found to be legal! If I recall, that was probably the night that they wouldn't let anyone out of the pits until their car was torn down. Charlie Cohee was a Sergeant on the Pleasantville Police Dept., a car owner and an active member of the stock

car racing association, so they put him in charge of keeping the cars impounded at the track.

Just before Jack got drafted into the Army, he built the # 29 coupe for Lew, which he did rather well with. When Jack came back, he and Lew picked up where they left off. They ran Friday at Reading, Saturday at Flemington and Sunday at Nazareth Pa... If they needed to test the car they would go down to Georgetown Del. On Wednesday night, so they were on a pretty hectic schedule. Ralph Smith out of Georgetown Delaware also drove for Jack, though not at Pleasantville.

Jack Stetser got out of the Army and joined the Maul Brothers' team late in the 1960 season, and Lew Mood finished up a very successful 1960 season at Pleasantville driving a 1937 sportsman Ford coupe # 29 that he and Jack Stetser had built in 1957-58.

At the end of the 1960 season, the Maul Brothers commissioned Lew Mood and Jack Stetser to build and maintain their cars for the next season.

Jack Stetser and Lew Mood repaired the 111 sedan that McLaughlin



had driven in 1960, and then they built a new 312 cubic inch, 1937 modified Ford sedan before the 1961 season. They also began work on converting the # 29 coupe that Lew had driven at Pleasantville into a 390 cubic inch, fuel-injected Modified with the engine set back 18 inches. The sedans did the racing in 1961 as the work on the coupe continued through the racing season.

If I could say that I regret one thing, it would be that these guys were a little ahead of my time and I wish that I could've watched them run every week. I've heard a lot of great stories over the years about the early 50's owners and drivers, of the rivalries that they had with one another and this story is just one of many, hopefully in the future there will be more of the same, with new information coming from all of you out there.

Additional info was supplied by Bill Skinner, thanks Bill.
