



Life on the line...

A full moon shone through the window, it was 04.21, July 7th - grabbed my Nikon, zoomed, fired and ran down stairs, images filling my mind's eye; Dragstalgia, the Moon landing, birthday celebrations, jumping down the front steps, shooting it Flash! It at 04.23 in the cool, clear morning air. My thoughts turning to a conversation with his wife Bev on the Sunday before, of shared tears, even brief laughs; my eyes closed, offering a silent prayer to the heavens before returning inside and going to bed...

Sadly, Stu, a warm and loveable dude, left us on the 10th of July; it's been moving to read the tributes posted on Eurodragster. Maybe I've led a sheltered life, but can't think of anyone ever saying a bad word about him. My thoughts and prayers are with Bev and Genna, his many friends and thousands of fans. We had a rapport from the start, and I truly enjoyed every minute spent in his company during the past half-century or so; God speed my friend...

These pages feature magic memories of my long-time pal Stu that I'm happy to be able to share with you; with some laughs along the way...

Stu loved Bob Taylor's classic Hot Rod Cartoon's artwork back in the day, enjoyed this cool sunset when Don Garlits took afternoon tea with some lucky fans at the Pod in 2014 and told me the shot of Timo Lehtimäki's NitroFire (just a hint seen behind the caveman's fuel coupe), was awesome; it's from the Pod's [final Saturday night quarter mile Top Fuel pass](#) in 2011. The end of an era Stu helped launch in 1966 when Ultra Sonic ran an 8.57 on a solo run just like Timo's except Bud Barnes was pedal to the metal the whole 1320, but Timo, who blazed a trail of NitroFire into the night, lifted early as the track'd gone away. Click to enjoy Ian Thomason's clip of an iconic pass; you can almost feel NitroThunder! My eclipsed moon was shot on the date they launched Apollo11 in '69, instantly changing the Hot Gossip feature, along with the BBC's same-day re-issue of a clip from their July 16th 1970 film of Santa Pod action where they shot Stu in posed action sequence as above while capturing yours truly "au naturel" - on [National TV!](#) These events adding fire to last year's celebrations; this year's were a tad subdued.

Friendships and bonds from those halcyon days lasted a lifetime; tears and memories flooding back while mixing this page, sparking a flame to celebrate Stu's life on the line, my AA Fuel Zippo running 100% nitro at Dragstalgia 2019...

Hot Gossip
words & photos
mike collins
Hand Cut Exclusive Mix For
eurodragster.com
courtesy

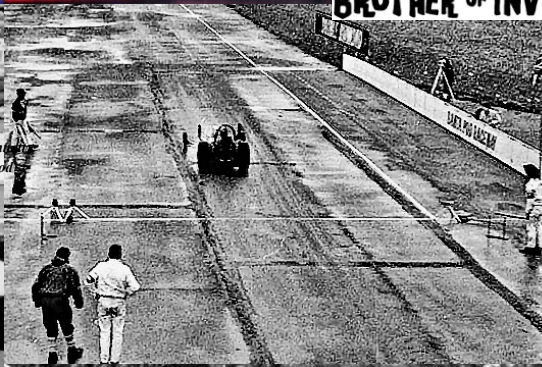
STREET MACHINE

John Bennett
DragRod photo

WHAT THAT?
IT CALLED WHEEL.WHAT IT DO?

1969 07 16
Apollo 11 launch

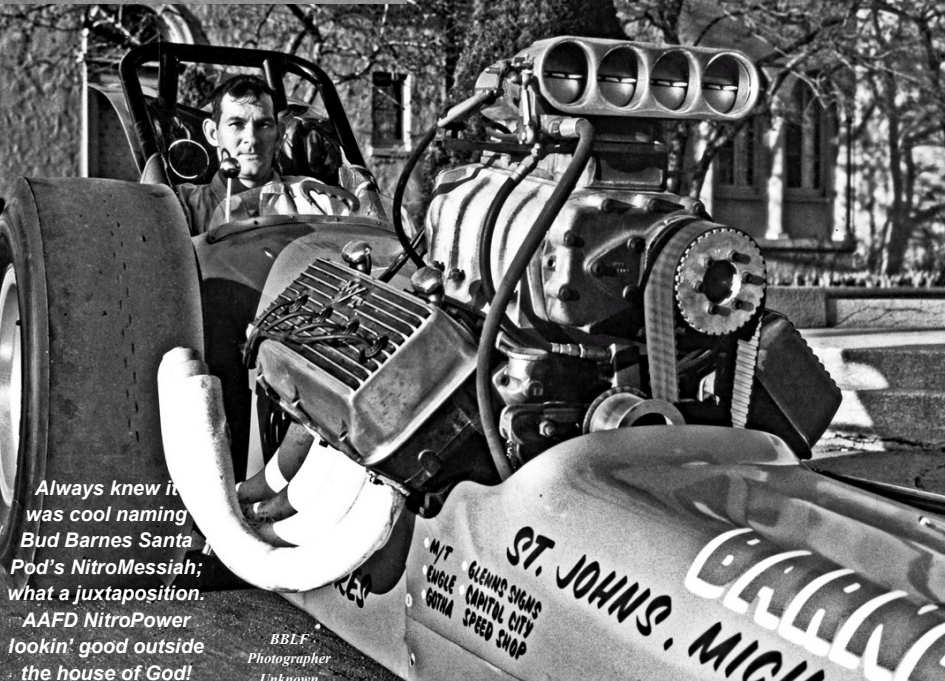
2019 07 16
Partial eclipse



Easter 1966; Harold Bull's Strip Duster set to make the first pass at Santa Pod Raceway, today's start line's way down t'other end! Going by the body language of Stu Bradbury at right, Chief Starter Brian Holmes and Clive Lingard's team mates, the Owen, Lingard, Hicks Purple Heart, Lincoln powered dragster has just suffered another cough from its carburettor, a problem that plagued the team all weekend. But then drag racing has never, ever been easy!



Club membership to the right, not so fast food at left and content lookin' fans on the rails as they say in the Poker world; a gamble almost as tough as drag racing!



Always knew it was cool naming Bud Barnes Santa Pod's NitroMessiah; what a juxtaposition. AAFD NitroPower lookin' good outside the house of God!

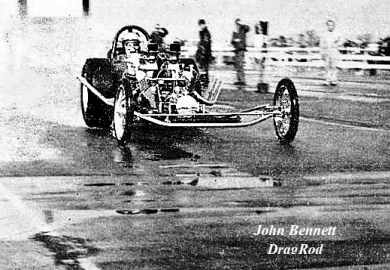
BBLF
Photographer
Unknown



John Bennett
DragRod

Visiting the Pod on a family day out as a spectator was a busy day, young daughter Sarah on my shoulders, her screams of excitement kinda loud; she kept me occupied to say the least! We had a fun and she loved the cowboy hat. Found out Chief Starter Brian Holmes and his trainee Stu were up for a laugh from the day we met before my first time on track...

From my second visit as a racer, it was obvious the start line team's job was serious business, even though the general idea here is to use shots featuring Stu in action; well he's lost under the spray from Bootsie's slicks (or out of focus in the background!), out of frame while Harold Bull gets a winner's trophy at BHRA's '66 Championship. And nowhere to be seen as Brian demonstrates the sprint-style staging device (used early in 1966), on Juggernaut, the back seat driven, Jaguar powered Model Y firm fan favourite.



John Bennett DragRod



Stu's probably taking a coffee break in the freshly finished tower!



Ron Fisher photos courtesy Nick Pettitt's BDR&HR Archives



John Bennett DragRod



Mick Wheeler photo courtesy Nick Pettitt's BDR&HR Archives

Pulsation looks far better in colour and bathed in sunshine, but my main memory from 1966 was rain at the end of the season, Stu telling me to "Be careful out there Mike; puddles at the top end are big enough to swallow your Half-a-Min!" He wasn't kidding as you can from these shots!

DragRod photos

Obviously, Stu was down the down at the start line when our photographer shot Vern Foales' skinny-wheeled Lurch, a flathead powered Ford Pilot and Cliff Jones' Corvette blasting by leaving a power boat style wake, its fine mist almost obscuring the Jagwahr. Things were definitely more laid back in those halcyon days, we had lots of fun and the excitement factor was way up, especially when it rained! Still no Stu; but some sunshine for OHL's Purple Heart fans.



Paul Hicks photo courtesy BDR&HR Archives

I know he's somewhere around this Cobra versus Charger match race as he wasn't alone in telling me they were the most exciting races of the US Team's visit; fans going nuts when gentleman Gerry Tyack took down Lawman Al Eckstrand's mighty 426 hemi charger a couple times! Later that year he set class records in the Cobra, a 12.750ET and then 112.4mph that lasted 'til 1968; new track meant new classes! Found Stu; stood way back when Ian Richardson launched Moonraker, the image turning my mind to EJ Potter, the Michigan Madman! Another fan favourite from the US team who loved seeing him smokin' on his injected 327 Chevrolet bike - an apt name! DragRod told fans that EJ's was the "Fastest motorcycle in the world"; it also said he ran a "10.6" - Bootsie ran a 10.680 and a 129.37mph class records in his Cadillac powered rail. However, the outright track record was owned by Les Turner, a south London engineer who not only built this beautiful blown 1500cc Ford dragster, he drove it down the quarter mile in 10.661 seconds and as fast as 131.23mph! At Elvington 1967, Les set international standing start marks; 11.06 1/4 mile; 12.53 at 500metres 20.2 for a Kilo' and a 29.62 second mile - not too shabby! The Ford went stock car racing in the '80s, the car resurrected in the '90s by Calvin Evans; that's pretty cool too! The car then went to Europe...



Ron Fisher photo courtesy titvds



John Bennett DragRod

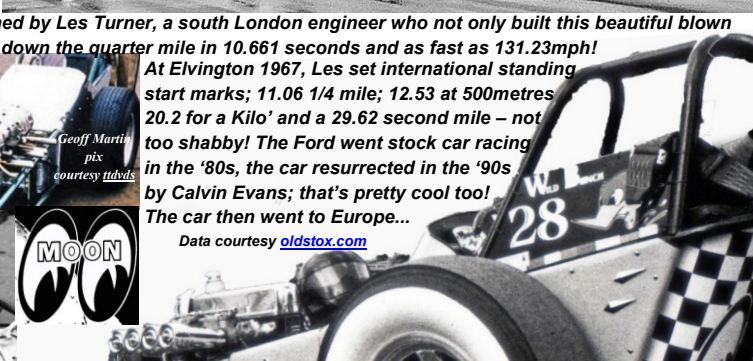


John Bennett DragRod

Got a tad sidetracked there folks, but only because everyone thought the car was so stunning; and its performance too; however the track records have no mention of Bud Barnes 8.57 thunder run, so maybe it never happened!. A couple years later Les became a biker with another incredibly well turned out machine called Doopa Doopa; an excuse to show you John Bennett's stunning shot of Alf Hagon, one of our original NitroWarriors...



Dave East pix courtesy titvds



Geoff Martin pix courtesy titvds

Data courtesy oldstox.com



John Bennett DragRod

Alf Hagon, a quiet, soft spoken bespectacled man was a grass track legend before he ever came to the Pod, but he soon built up a legion of fans with his smoke laden, NitroFueled power blasts as he attempted to master the quarter mile. By 1967 most of my time when not racing was spent on the start line with Stu; we were soon staunch supporters of the 2-wheeled tornado as he got quicker, faster and made more smoke! One day he'd had a problem on a run, Stu and I set off for a break, passing his van; he was working so stopped for a chat. "What's the problem Alf?" He took the bowed push rod he'd just removed, placed it on a flat surface, rolled it and chuckled around, "It's bent," laughing as he turned to pick up a hammer, still laughing as he added, "No problem, just gotta straighten it out..." We both stood silent as rolled the rod, all the while tap-tapping with this hammer, then he laughed again, "That should do it," rolling it out from his hand, the now straightened push rod sliding smoothly across the top; chuckling again, "Now we can try get that record!" We forgot all about our break; shortly later the rebuilt engine fired to life on his rollers, sounding sweet and smooth as he drove it to the ground. The rear slick was soon raised on a rolling jack as Alf zipped up his leathers, donned his helmet, slid on gloves and climbed aboard. Fans cheered as he blasted down track, smokin' to a first ever 2-wheeled, 9-second quarter mile; what a hero...

Cool

John Bennett DragRod



Brian Sutton courtesy titvds

Love the clockwork key push bar! In 1967 Bud Barnes gave us NitroThunder in the wet and took out the lights - then he ran an 8.47 and I agreed with Stu it was an unmatched feeling!

This run is not the one illustrated: just love the image is all! MC



Brian Sparrow pix courtesy ttdvds

And didn't it rain... The RAC gave us a rain date; we got three weekends of racing and each minute we seemed to have some new magic, like plenty of sunshine; with Stu and the start-line crew all masked up as Ultra Sonic was loaded for bear! We didn't get any 7-second,



It's great to see a shot of Bob Phelps just having a good time!

Photographer unknown courtesy ttdvds

200mph promised in the US Team's bumpf; but for NitroNeophytes likes yours truly, it was pure NitroNirvana, especially the first time I stood alongside Ultra Sonic after Stu had told me "Hang onto y'r legs Mike you're goin' for a wild ride!" and given me a shove towards the cackling AA Fuel dragster... Earlier Stu had told me, "You've no idea what power is until you stood alongside a Fuel dragster..." Then I told him I'd felt absolute power for the first time a decade earlier; having been a "bad lad" I was made to double (run!), around the 630 foot long flight deck of the aircraft carrier I was learning to drive! No problem, being fit, healthy and a tad younger than today, I'd just sucked it up and got going, using the old runners trick of looking at the road just ahead; but suddenly, instead of being flat it felt like climbing a hill that became a rising wall of steel with my face getting closer as I leaned forward... An instant later the carrier dropped violently and suddenly, my body hung in mid air for a millisecond of weightlessness, then I discovered, as most folks do sometime in their lives that only Superman can fly! Oops; falling down the face of the largest wave I'd ever seen, chasing the huge flight deck as it dropped beneath me into an awesome abyss. My fall was way nearer to 30feet than 20, but I'd seen the movies; bent my legs on landing, rolled, picked myself up and ran on, moments later being told over the PA to clear the deck and report to the bridge. No problem, slowing to a brisk pace, my mind was trying to assimilate the power that could just lift 13,190 tons as if it were a bag of ping-pong balls, and then drop it again moments later! But Stu was oh-so-right; that NitroPower sensation continues to this day, each and every time.



John Bennett DragRod

The factory backed Allard Anglia had fuel starvation problems, Stu looking concerned at the cloud from the headers, while Opus One's driver's hangin' on and haulin' the mail. Loved JB's shot at right, so I colour coded Stu as he sends off a cool lookin' Ford coupe, one of the track's first privateers to gain sponsorship



John Bennett DragRod

Click it to see Brian, Stu and the start line crew with star cars from 1967 and '68; no sound but you'll love the colourful action...

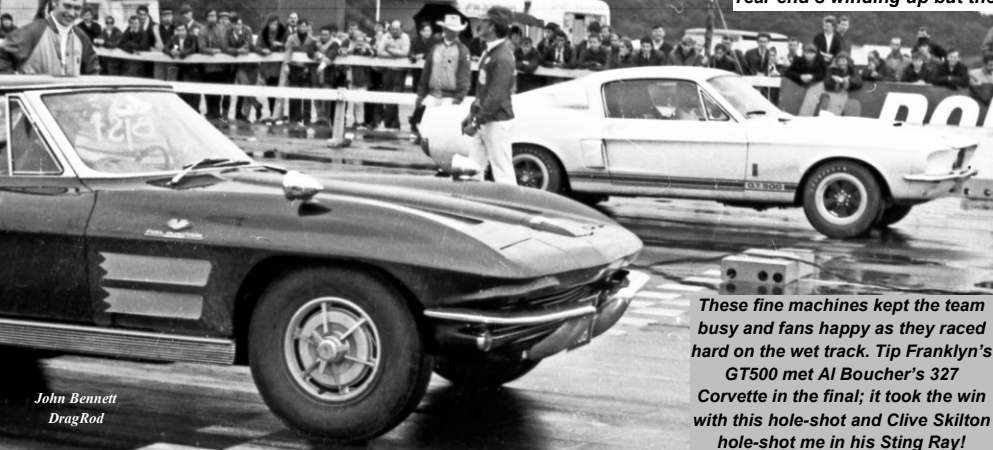


Brian Sutton pix courtesy ttdvds

Stu wasn't alone in falling for one of the colourful, very good lookin' Mustangs; sadly there was no "mixed" Ford vs Mopar racing for political reasons! It was kinda cool having 'em four wide; and that Mustang's got the hole-shot! Just can't recall how far they ran that way! It was fun, but again we wanted powerful cars not ones with pretty wheels and paintjobs; when pairs did race it was balls to the wall for bragging rights! We had better luck with a group of US servicemen that drove over from Ramstein, in Muscle Cars! Then they were told they could only race themselves - in the rain naturally! At left Stu's wondering just why the rear end's winding up but the GT500's going nowhere! Guess who forgot to lift the LineLoc!



Brian Sparrow pix courtesy ttdvds



John Bennett DragRod

These fine machines kept the team busy and fans happy as they raced hard on the wet track. Tip Franklyn's GT500 met Al Boucher's 327 Corvette in the final; it took the win with this hole-shot and Clive Skilton hole-shot me in his Sting Ray!

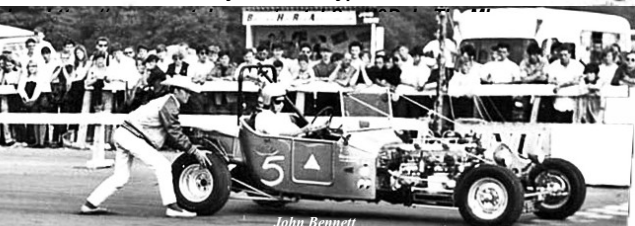


Brian Sutton pix courtesy ttdvds



John Bennett DragRod

Holding Geoff Jago's T bucket back for Di Floyd or helping her stage! Either way, Stu earned his money that weekend! Di was beaten by Christine Skilton in hubby Clive's E Type...

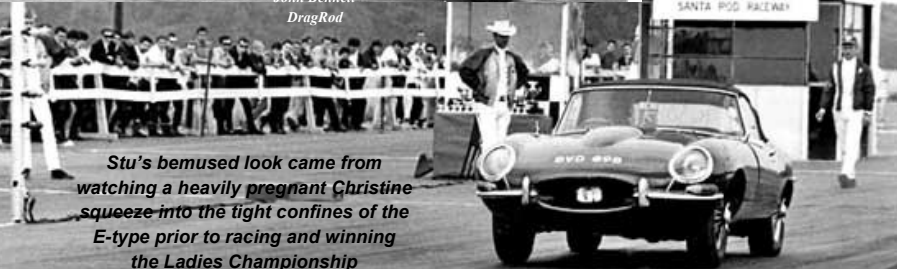


John Bennett DragRod



John Bennett DragRod

Brian Sutton pix courtesy ttdvds



Stu's bemused look came from watching a heavily pregnant Christine squeeze into the tight confines of the E-type prior to racing and winning the Ladies Championship

DRAG RACING & HOT ROD

The only magazine on Britain's fastest growing motor sport

in this issue

- THE FANTASTIC BATMOBILE
- MOTORCYCLE REGULATIONS

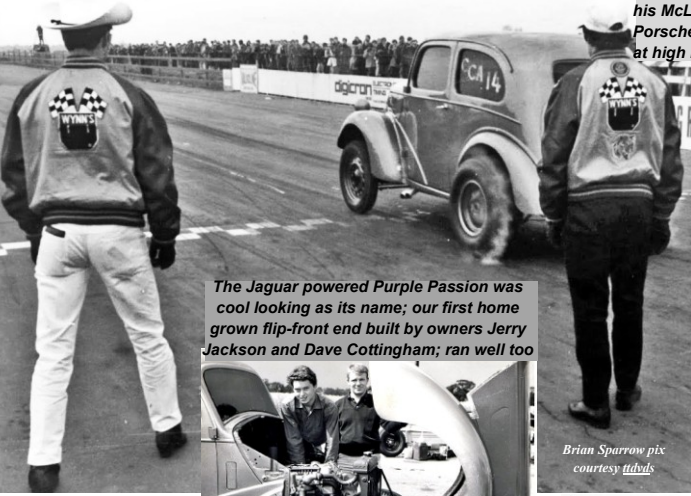
1967 was a good year; Tony Densham, our first Top Eliminator, drove the Commuter to a new home grown ET record of 9.196! We had Batman on DragRod's cover and the rain date weekend was pretty cool too, with enough sunshine for folks to get tans! But we lacked side-by-side NitroThunder...



Brian Sutton pix courtesy ttdvds



Mind you we did have some kinda exotic, but very quick slammers; Bob Rose thrilling fans when he drove his McLaren to 11.668 at 131.23mph; and it was street legal! Gentleman Gerry Tyack was back with a rare Porsche Carrera GT that ran a 12.56 at 113mph and gave fans a lesson in aural pain when he missed a shift at high rpm; the sound was quite frightening, to say the least, and it just might've been expensive too...



The Jaguar powered Purple Passion was cool looking as its name; our first home grown flip-front end built by owners Jerry Jackson and Dave Cottingham; ran well too

Brian Sparrow pix courtesy ttdvds



Our first heads-up Championship final was won by Alan Ing; Stu noticed a small boy wriggle through the fence and stopped him; "Please, my uncle's just won," said the lad, so Stu let him enjoy the moment. Back in the 20th century I met him again and he told me what a thrill it had given him...

John Bennett DragRod



Bob Rose seemed to be beaten by a hole-shot until Keith Sales mighty Megalomania dropped its chute. The car was a heavy weight in every sense, and really shook the ground when they fired up, it also spent time making wild out of shape launches as you'll see when you click the link

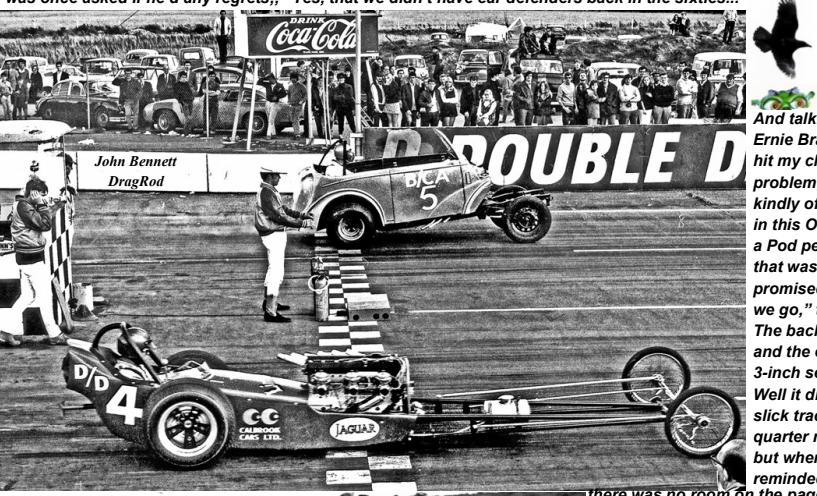


John Bennett DragRod



John Bennett DragRod

Stu was our DeeJay at this wild party at Stripside Stores, keeping folks happy and dancing, and playing the very cool Geno Washington which got me an' my babe up and a bopping as they say; then suddenly it's 1968 and here he is playing gunfighter again. The Jaguar powered Limelight's leaves on a much lightened Hushabye V8 Pop/Anglia and that rail is screamin' as Ian's got hands jammed in his ears; Don Schumacher was once asked if he'd any regrets; "Yes, that we didn't have ear defenders back in the sixties..."



John Bennett DragRod

And talking of stories, that Aston Martin under the Coca-Cola sign is the car my daughter Sarah put into Ernie Braddick's field before she was four years old! But only because we hit a yump at speed and her head hit my chin on landing; she'd turned to say sorry, turned the steering wheel too and off-road we went! No problem; she loved driving the car; on my lap obviously, and told Stu she wanted to drive a race car, so he kindly offered the Dragreculturalmobile or Hay-Wain or as it was known. Lo and behold, minutes later we're in this Oldsmobile Rocket, my lady friend sat in the floor, Sarah on my lap and I fired the beast up; Stu and a Pod person reminded me to take it easy as I drove out onto the track. Of course once we got settled, all that was thrown up in the air, I told Sarah not to turn the wheel, just let go if there was any problem and she promised not to as we staged. "It's all yours sunshine," turning my head and offering "Hang on babe, here we go," to the gal on the floor; the lights ran, my hands came off the wheel and I nailed it. The back, roof and rear quarter panels had been cut out to make a pick up. Wide street tires were bought and the original wheels had to be widened; they jst cut 'em in half with an oxy-acetylene torch, welded in a 3-inch section and Stu told me "Looking back, God knows how we ever got them to run straight!" Well it didn't really, not with my foot flat on the floor, the Rocket V8 trying to lay down some power on the slick track, my lady friend screaming on the floor, Sarah loving every second as we slithered down the quarter mile; it would've been in the late teens probably. That day has been etched in my memory forever, but when I was starting to write the tale, got in touch with Stu for some tech info and apart from the fact he reminded me there'd been no seat, just a packing case that was not bolted down, he related this tale; sadly there was no room on the page at that time, and right now we're a tad behind schedule, but as these pages are for Bev, Gemma, his friends and fans, so here's Stu's story in his own words that'll let you know we had fun back the day...



John Bennett DragRod

After a lot of work we'd converted the '50s Olds into the club's new emergency track response vehicle; not quite finished, and with nowhere secure to store the fire extinguishers, brushes, rags, kitty litter (the only oil cleaner absorber that worked with oil puddles) it was just slung in the back of the pickup bed! The seat was a wooden packing box, high enough to see over the dash board; okay for driving slowly, but not much good for shooting off up the strip to an incident and braking hard as the seat wasn't bolted down! Idiots!! This I soon found out to my cost on a very wet and windy day at Santa Pod; it'd been pouring with rain for some time, then it eased off, so dick head me decided to inspect the strip. As I say, the old girl was okay slow, but not with any speed behind her. With a little encouragement from one Mike Collins, who was at that time commentator who said, "Go on Stu, give it some," Well being a drag racer, 'at's all the encouragement needed! So I floored it and almost instantly it was like riding the Magic Roundabout; finish line, barrier, start line, barrier, and finish line - my view! This carried on seemingly forever before the Oldsmobile 88 decided enough was enough and headed straight for the right hand barrier with me along as the passenger, I say that because that's where was, in the passenger side foot well with the wooden packing box seat that we hadn't bolted down. Well, needless to say, the car came to an abrupt halt; rumblings then became apparent as all sorts of fire extinguishers, brushes, tool kit, that bloody Kitty litter, which got everywhere, came hurtling towards me at break neck speed! Thank the Lord most of it exited the vehicle missing me by inches. Our much loved Dragreculturalmobile didn't come off so well. A crumpled front grill, headlights and radiator etc put paid to us ever getting her back on the track. Not sure what happened to the car after that; it more than likely rotted away in some scrap yard in Northamptonshire. Hey-Ho as they say!!!



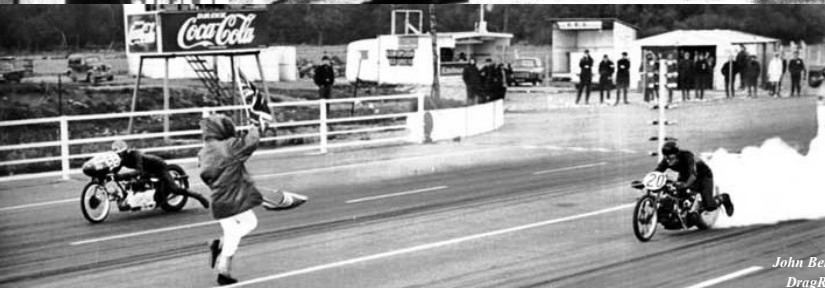
Vic Hubbard pix courtesy ttdvds



Still can't believe just how quick Stu reacted to this errant Fuel Coupe; it's hard work being the Chief Starter, a position he filled superbly for close to 25 years!



Peter Robain photos



John Bennett
Drag Rod



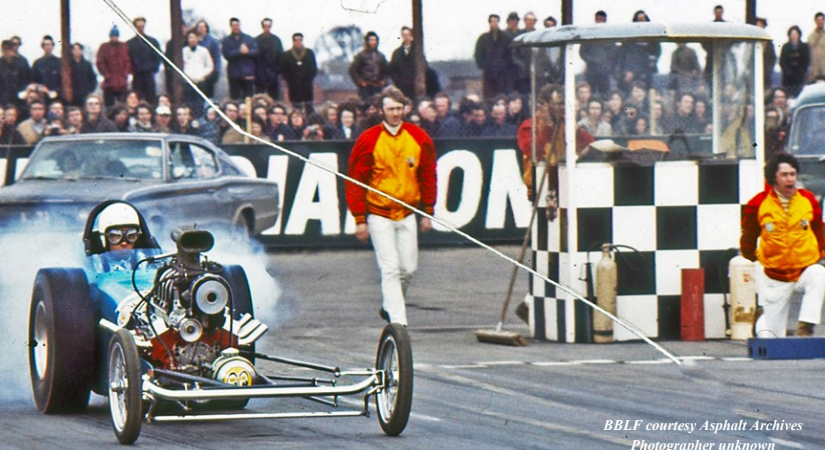
No cowboy boots!



One of the most amazing races ever seen at Santa Pod, and it happened in the dark!

Mike Collins photo

Sometimes it got very cold at the Pod; US winter-wear really worked! Couple of times the guys an' gals had beach parties with bikinis! Other times it got dark and kinda scary at the Pod; and very exciting too!



BBLF courtesy Asphalt Archives
Photographer unknown

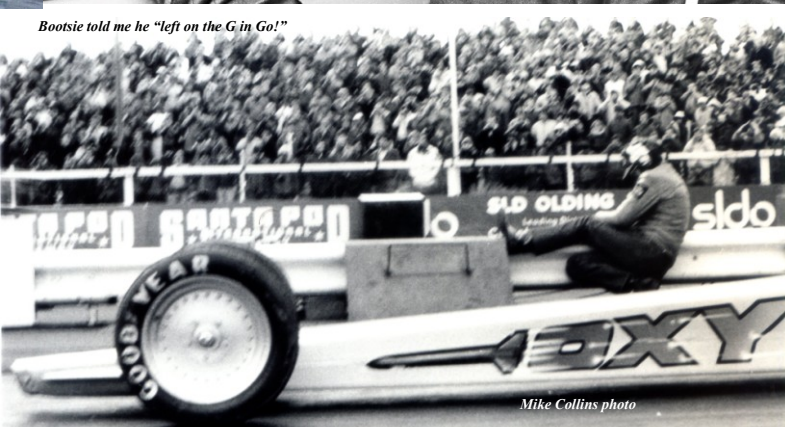


After a couple weekends Sam told me he Stu worked well; shortly later he said "I trust him..."

Mike Collins photo



Mike Collins photo



Mike Collins photo



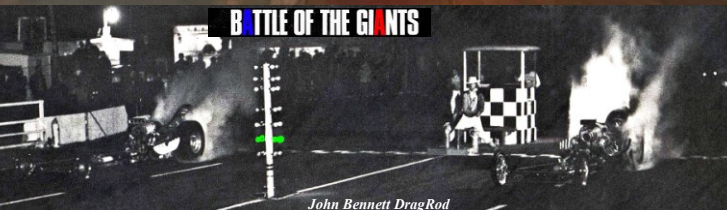
Mike Collins photo



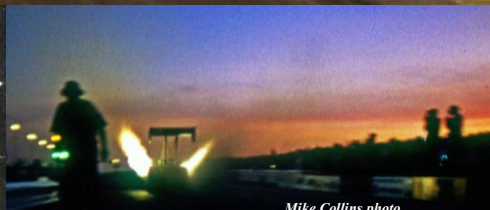
Mike Collins photo



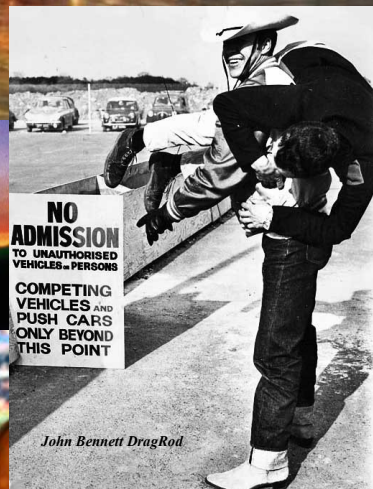
Courtesy Santa Pod Facebook



John Bennett DragRod



Mike Collins photo



John Bennett DragRod



Mike Collins photo



Wojtek photo



Paul Maslin Pix courtesy UK&EDR Photos



Andy Willsheer photo



Mike Collins photo



Mike Collins mix



21st century blues; for family, friends and fans...
 Stu B Portrait Dragstalgia July 10 2011
 Back in 2011 Stu greeted me with this grin as I drove in behind the start line at the first Dragstalgia; shot from the hip behind the wheel of my T'bird, it became an all-time favourite portrait that often fills my mind's eye. Couple days ago, July 27 2020, this half moon caught my eye; hopefully you will enjoy this mix for Stu Bradbury, Sky Warrior 2020 07 10 RIP