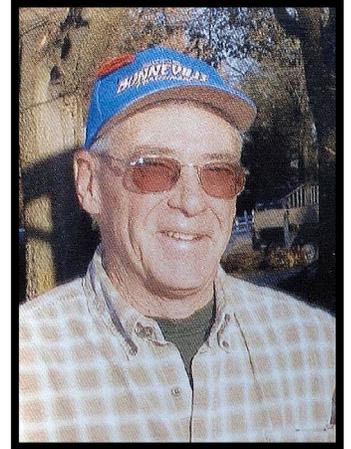




## ***GARY WELDON*** ***Millgrove, Ontario***

### ***2011 Inductee***



It's 3,500 kilometers from Millgrove, Ontario to the Salt Flats of Bonneville, Utah. That equates to a grueling four days drive in a 1948 Ford Pick Up when you're pulling a trailer full of race car, parts and tools. But there's no place this year's Hall Of Fame Inductee **GARY WELDON** would rather be come August then at Speed Week campaigning his 1928 Ford Roadster on the salt.

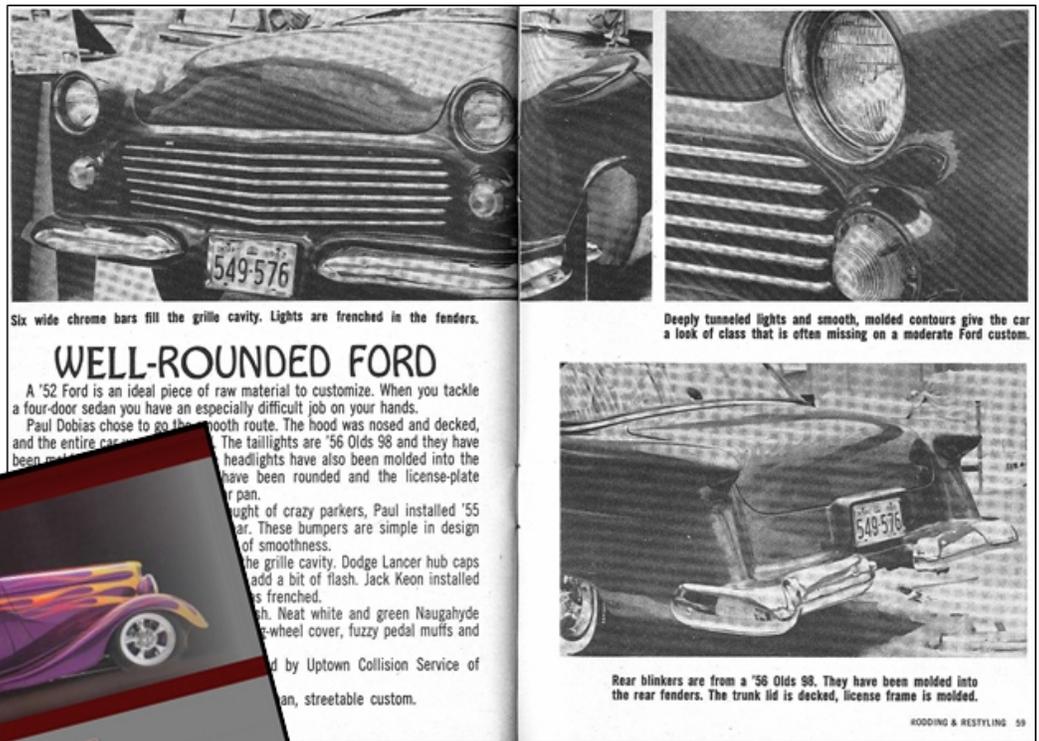
He's been there every year since 1999 and that's an accomplishment in itself but Gary's story goes back long before he caught salt fever.

Gary was born and raised in Hamilton and Ancaster, Ontario. He says he was named after the street his family lived on "Gary Avenue". He liked cars even as a child and fondly recalls his father driving new Buicks throughout the 1950's. Those Buicks left an indelible impression on his young mind. But it was a weekend trip to Guelph with his Aunt and Uncle when he was about 12 years old that shaped his automotive future. While wandering around exploring Guelph he saw his first real hot rod. To this very day he believes it was Hall Of Fame alumni Ken Kay and his milestone Model A pick up. Regardless, the seed was planted and Gary knew he was going to build and drive a hot rod some day.



A couple of years later he got his first car, a 1948 Ford bought in Copetown and driven home by the then under aged, unlicensed and uninsured young hot rodder. He did his first engine swap on the '48 dropping in a Mercury flathead. Now he had a real hot rod!

He started hanging around the Road Runners Car Club about that time but he didn't qualify for membership as his car did not have the required modifications. In 1964 he became a member when he purchased a customized 1952 Ford. He remained an active member of the Road Runners for over 25 years.



By this time Gary had been in and out of school and had a couple of menial jobs. He was not thinking of a career when he started at Dafasco repairing coke ovens. He was good at it but found it boring, a discussion with a supervisor lead to a move to the byproducts area where he spent the next 15 years. Gary's work ethic, abilities and leadership skill ultimately lead him to become the supervisor responsible for the entire coke plant including by products and waste water. He stayed with Dafasco his entire career retiring early in 1992.

He maintains his involvement in the industry working as a consultant in coke plants across North America.

...coke you say???



But let's go back to the 60's.

Gary became a drag racing enthusiast as a fan and occasional racer at Cayuga and Niagara Dragways. A host of cars followed including a '64 Falcon set up for drag racing, a dual purpose '66 Valiant 273 power pack, an El Camino and others came and went.



But one stayed and remains today, a 1930 Ford Model A Coach that proudly carries the license plates "CHOP IT".



The coach was built on a budget and showcases Gary's workmanship, ingenuity and attention to detail. One of the more obvious components is a Weldon engineered turbo charger from an 828 cubic inch Caterpillar diesel adapted to a Buick nailhead engine. Although the car is a show winning beauty it's no trailer queen.... it is driven! It has made the trip to Bonneville a number of times, plus countless NSRA and CSRA nationals as family vacations and even earned Top Eliminator title at the first Street Rod Drags held at St. Thomas years ago.





The Road Runners got into the indoor car show business for a number of years and Gary was responsible for filling the building with top notch vehicles.



He got out and visited many of the car clubs in Ontario and sold people on participating in the Hamilton shows. He also laid out the floor plan and assisted in judging.

Through these years he was busy with his career, met and married Barb, started a family and raised two great kids, daughter Tracy and son Scott.

In addition, he renovated and restored his home, played and coached baseball, worked as an ISCA judge, assisted CSRA at the safety lanes, helped friends with their projects and still found time to build a scale T-Bucket and soap box derby racer for his kids.



In 1978 a spur of the moment decision took Gary in new direction. He and friend Chris Adams jumped on a plane and went to Bonneville. He had read about Speed Week and Land Speed Racing in hot rod magazines and wanted to see it. So, proudly wearing their new 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Road Runners car club jackets, they arrived on the salt. There were only a few street rods and a couple of hundred spectators but the excitement got them pumped.



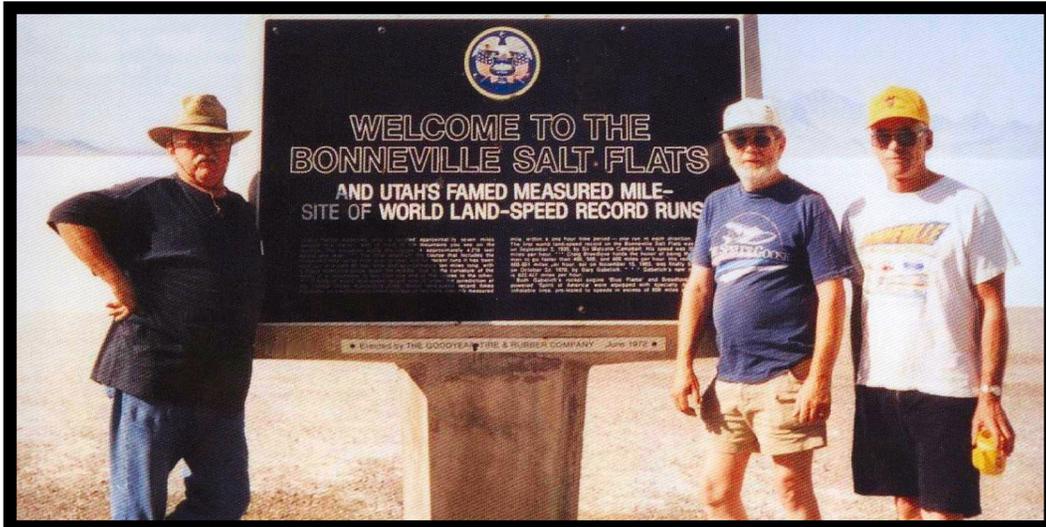
One of the first things they noticed was a race team wearing Road Runners jackets. They got talking to these people and discovered the Road Runners from Los Angeles were one of the founding clubs of the Southern California Timing Association, the body that runs Speed Week and were still very active.

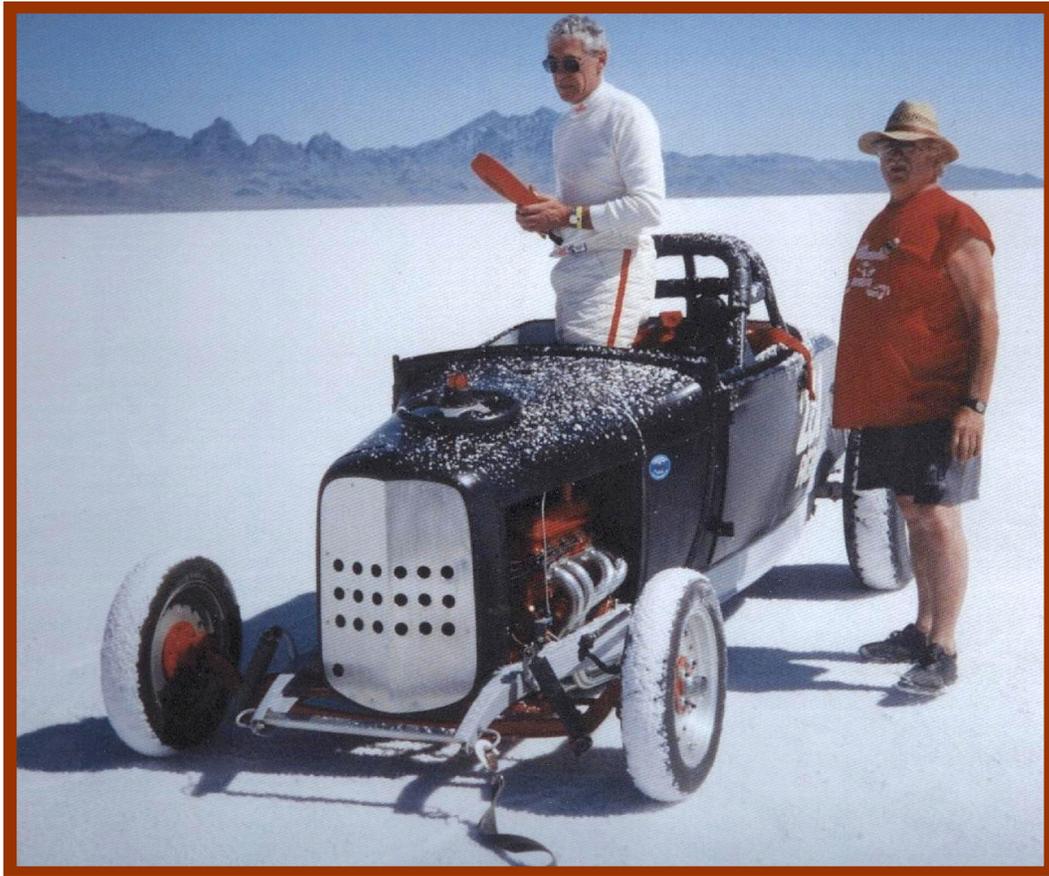
This group of serious racers lead by Jerry Kugel of Kugel Components included Gary and Chris in their crew. Before the week was over Gary was mesmerized by the salt and was hooked.

Weldon left Bonneville on a high, they almost bought a car right there but realized that was not a practical option. However, the gears were turning for Gary as he dreamed about returning to the salt and someday competing there.

For the next 10 years he made the annual trek, often driving his street rod, just to be a part of excitement.

In 1990 he decided that the money he was spending each year to go as a spectator could be better spent building a car to actually run at Bonneville. He shared these thoughts with his good friend Harold Watson and they partnered on the project. It was a slow process, they committed every Wednesday evening to working on the race car and searched the swap meets and wrecking yards accumulating parts. It seemed that every week or so, they found something for the race car.





They went through a number of iterations before settling on a '28 Ford Roadster body but there was never any doubt that it would be powered by a nail head Buick.

With help from a bunch of friends Harold and Gary finally hit the salt in 1999. They passed tech and made several successful runs earning their "D" license.



But 12 months is a long time between races so for a few years they took the car to Maxton, an old airport runway track, near Myrtle Beach South Carolina and participated in the East Coast Timing Association events setting class records.

Gary's ingenuity and skills are evident in everywhere.

They needed a tow vehicle to haul the car to Bonneville and a push vehicle once they were there, so Gary built a dual purpose truck. A 1948 Ford Pick up with a 364 nail head Buick set up to tow AND push. This street rod does triple duty as it is also Gary's year round daily driver.



Weldon's life continues to revolve around the race car and Bonneville. Even son Scott's wedding in Japan had to be rescheduled so that it wouldn't conflict with Speed Week.

Gary continues to work on the car and make the pilgrimage to the salt flats. Unfortunately, his friend and partner Harold Watson passed away last fall leaving a huge void. Gary vows the roadster will always carry the Watson and Weldon name as a monument to Harold and the dreams they shared.

We are proud to honour GARY WELDON as the 44<sup>th</sup> member of the Canadian Street Rodding Hall of Fame.

Welcome Gary!

