**Gary Southern Bio**

The late Gary Southern was one of the most versatile drivers in the sport. He competed in every type of nitro burning car from AA/Fuel Altered to AA/Fuel dragsters and included some Alcohol cars along the way. Gary didn’t limit himself to just drag racing either, he was also a stiff competitor in go carts often competing in both categories on the same night. During his driving career, he was at the controls of more than 75 nitro and alcohol cars which makes him, if not the top person, probably close to the top, of having driven the most cars in the sport.

Gary began his driving career in drag racing in 1957 at the wheel of a flathead powered Altered Roadster owned by Will Tice and continued driving up to the late 1990’s. The next year he made his first appearance in a AA/Fuel Dragster and from that time on, he was the “have helmet will drive” person to go to for many teams. He started his career in an altered roadster and the last car he drove was a Fuel Altered roadster. Included in the list of people he drove AA/Fuel Dragsters for was Wilton & Doss, Hawkins & Akins, Bob Meyer, and Hippo Bremmer, to list just a few. His list of AA/Fuel Funny Cars was just as extensive, such as John Lindsey’s “Impulse” Vega and Ted Combas’ Capt. Crazy. He also drove the infamous Akins & Hardcastle Stinger 2 and when NHRA outlawed it because its body was not an American made car, Gary took it on an incredible nationwide tour.

While he was a super competitor, he didn’t limit his skill to just open competition. He a drove a dragster in the 1990 American Express Superbowl commercial featuring Paul Newman, he was the stunt driver at the wheel of the go cart and he also spun the dragster out in the movie “Bikini Beach,” and he drove the “Coffin” dragster that was featured in one of the Munster TV shows.

His most prestigious win was at the 1988 NHRA U. S. Nationals in Indianapolis, IN at the wheel of Dale Smarts AA/Alcohol dragster and the pair won the final race at the original Irwindale Raceway track. Gary won Middle Eliminator at the Bakersfield March Meet in 1967 in the Stinger 2 prior to its NHRA ban. At age 80+-, he was still competitively driving, this time in go carts. In 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, racing at the Wheel2Wheel Raceway in Victorville CA, he posted 10 wins and came in second in the championships in 2021 and 2022, finishing second to his grandson.