**Walt Austin Bio**

For his 16th birthday, the late Walt Austin’s dad got him his first car, a 1937 Chevrolet Coupe, which Walt promptly installed a 455 Oldsmobile in for power and a Pontiac rear end to accept the power. From its distinctive sound, he garnered a bit of neighborhood fame but a year later, becoming more serious about racing, he swapped the ’37 for a 1936 Chevy Coupe but kept the Olds engine and installed it in the ’36. Before long he began modifying the Olds engine, his first one, the addition of six carburetors. At about this same time he also began racing in A/Gas class, winning his first couple of races.

In 1957, Walt teamed up with Bruce Cole who owned a rear engine chassis and swapped the Olds engine from the Chevy into the dragster and the pair never lost a single race. Living in Tacoma, WA with considerable technical knowledge, in 1960 at only age 22, Walt was appointed Technical Director of the Tacoma Timing Association.

Walt continued searching for better and faster equipment and in 1961 he teamed up with Gene Olson in a Ally-Opp 1928 Ford roadster with the Olds engine, now equipped with a front-mount supercharger, for power. Unfortunately, something in the front end of the roadster broke during a run and the car was totaled. In 1962 Walt had chassis builder Dave Jeffers build him a front engine dragster chassis for which he built and installed his first 392 Chrysler Hemi engine on gas. With Walt building and tuning and Jeffers driving, the pair posted 50 straight round wins that year alone.

When his dad passed away in 1962, Walt, at age 24, put racing on hold to take over the job of successfully running and growing his dad’s automotive service business. His retirement ended in 1971 when he built a AA/Gas Dragster powered by twin supercharged Chrysler Hemi engines. This combination proved to be a real winner, posting 350 AA/Gas class wins along with setting and resetting the NHRA class record six times and winning the NHRA Division 6 class Championship.

Around 2000, Walt broke the popular Chrysler – Chevy engine mold and teamed with John Rodeck to produce a unique, Ford based Top Alcohol engine. Unfortunately, NHRA outlawed it before it even reached the racetrack, so he returned to the Chrysler Hemi for his Funny Car. However, Walt’s idea proved its merit 20 years later when his grandson, Drew, introduced it for power in the A/fuel dragster and then moving to nostalgia Funny Car (N/FC) Car he was competing in the NHRA Hot Rod Heritage Racing Series with.

Retirement from racing came again in 1972 when he stopped racing to focus on building his automotive service business and coaching his sons in football. Adding to his winning record, the football teams coached by Walt only lost one game over the next five years.

Walt un-retired again in 1985, to go racing with a AA/Alcohol Funny Car. With sons Pat and Mike now totally involved in racing, in 1986 he founded Walt Austin Racing (WAR) and concentrated on building and maintaining the teams AA/Alcohol Funny Car and wracking up a win record of 75 NHRA national class wins.

Included in Walt’s honor list is:

AM/Roadster 1320 record holder

2-time NHRA Division 6 Top Gas Champion

1969 Wynns Oil Top Mechanic award

1969 AA/Gas Champion NHRA WinterNationals, Dave Grassi, owner/driver, Walt Crew Chief/Tuner

World’s winningest Sportsman Crew Chief, 1987 and 1998

Northwest Funny Car 6 race series Championship 1984

Walt and Pat are one of two fathers and sons to be inducted into the International Drag Racing Hall of Fame, along with Connie and Scott Kalitta.