**Walt Barbin Bio**

In his early teens, Walt was really into baseball but around his 13th birthday he started hanging around with some older guys that were into hot rods and racing and he quickly became hooked along with them. His first car was a 1936 Ford convertible that he installed an Oldsmobile engine in. In 1954 a drag strip was opened on an abandoned airstrip not far from where he lived, and he was able to start getting serious about racing and building better equipment.

By 1958 he had added a supercharger for more power however, it used V Belts to drive it and the belts wouldn’t stay on during a run. Also, by this time Walt had purchased a Curry lathe and was doing machine work for a living. His lathe used a Gilmore type belt system and one day while he was changing its drive speed, he got the idea to try this belt system for the supercharger drive system. He made pulleys that matched the belt, installed them and it worked. Walt has always been into problem solving but he never became involved in marketing his inventions but was okay with others copying them so before long his Gilmore System was on the market by other manufacturers.

Walt moved from the ’36 Ford to a Hemi Chrysler powered Fuel dragster and began applying his talent for developing new and improved parts for this class. At this time, a lot of effort was being made by the camshaft manufacturers that included roller tappet lifters. The lifters worked okay but the push rods started bending and other problems developed in the valve system. Always working to eliminate a problem, Walt redesigned the rocker arms being used and soon all the cam manufacturers were using his design for their units.

In 1963 Walt opened his own speed shop that was equipped with a complete machine shop. He was also still running his AA/Fuel dragster and learning more ways to improve its horsepower output. About this time, he realized the engines needed more air but the superchargers couldn’t put out more air without scuffing. One day while cooking with a Teflon coated frying pan he got the idea to try coating the impellers with Teflon to stop the scuffing which worked. However, the Teflon would not adhere to the impellers if there was any oil on them, so he tried inserting Teflon strips in them and more, he introduced an improvement that was soon being copied by the other manufacturers.

Each time he reassembled his dragster he would push start it on the street to fire it and “dial it in.” Unfortunately, the local cops didn’t believe that was a good idea, so they told him to stop it. This led to Walts’ next big contribution to improving the sport, a starter system. He had a friend that was involved in Indy Car racing and when Walt saw him use a crank starter to fire it, he immediately went to work designing one for drag cars. The Fuel Dragster guys and the racetracks liked having the cars push start in front of the spectators so it didn’t receive much acceptance there but the Funny Car racers liked the starter idea. His first customer was Jungle Jim Liberman who touted it, and the rest is history.

Walt wasn’t through making improvements, in 1968 he was running a match race but when he upped the nitro percentage the spark plugs showed a very lean condition. In an effort to supply more fuel to the injectors he eventually came up with a plan to overdrive the fuel pump through a gear system. Once more his idea worked and once more several established manufacturers began using his design.

Walt sold his business in 1972 and after a short retirement he accepted an invitation by Don Garlits to be one of his prime crewmen for the season. While working with Don and his “monster motor” engine combination, Walt realized the engine was again starving for air and after checking around he found there were several larger superchargers being produced but they weren’t practical for use on drag race engines. He put together a design for a larger unit and contacted Mark Danakas who was building superchargers and explained what he had in mind. While Walt and Mark didn’t put a program together, it wasn’t long before Mark introduced his 8:71 supercharger to the sport and as usual, it wasn’t long before all of the competitive manufacturers were producing one like it.

Over the years, Walt has enjoyed drag racing as a competitor but more importantly, he has contributed much to it as a parts innovator and the sport owes him a lot of gratitude.