

AL CHARTERS

Pioneer - Karting - Inducted 2009



By Jim Greenwood - edited by Tom Johnston, 2009



Al with one of his many trophies
(Jim Greenwood collection)

At the early age of 14 years Al got started on a trip that has lasted from then until now with no signs of letting up.

Al first started his welding career at fourteen years of age when he bought his first welding outfit. He also purchased a Model A at fourteen and he was on his way. At seventeen, he traded his first Model A for a chopped '31 Model A Coupe and then went on to another '31 A which he repowered with an 85 horsepower V8.

Al graduated from North Vancouver High School and carried on with his welding at Bristol Aircraft during which he was involved in the forming of the first go-kart club. The British Columbia Go Karting Association (BCGKA). The BCGKA built the first karting track Fell Ave in North Burnaby. The Shellburn refinery was located just across Hastings Street and they donated the asphalt for the track.

During this period Al became known as the two stroke master, he had a knack for squeezing the most out of a two stroke engine. His knowledge and skills were the reason

for many racing wins for Al and many others that Al tuned for. About 1960, the club built a race track at Westwood. Al was welding frames and still doing his two stroke magic and winning races. He was the Western Canadian Champion for 100cc lay down karts in road racing and, the Tyee Gold Cup Champion for BC and Washington.

It didn't take long before the motorcycle world learned about Al's welding skills and he was approached by Don Solem of Deeley's to make a frame for a Yamaha flat tracker to be ridden by Larry Garbe. This led to more welding specialty work for Al. Al's three years welding at Bristol Aero Engines and 19 years at White Trucks (later Freightliner) certainly paid off. Al was now the one everyone came to if they had a special welding job to be done including those like John Cafilitch and his Formula V Wedge Car.

Al spent some time building Baja Bugs and dune buggies out of Volkswagens when the rage spread here from California. He is well known for widening wheels for Buggies and Dwarf cars.

In 1980, Al and his family moved to Vernon where he worked for a

company that built cabs and bus bodies for Muskeg track machines and the tour bus bodies for the Columbia Ice Fields.

One day Al saw a TV show on dwarf cars and after tracking down the info decided to build one which was the first one in the area. It took about three years to get it right and then he started the Okanagan Dwarf Car Club (ODCC). There are about 24 cars in the club of which Al built five. The club races in Vernon, Penticton, Victoria and Courtney. Al has built and raced the dwarf cars for about 15 years but had to retire in 2004 due to a hip replacement.

These days Al still tinkers on racing projects but has become an avid fly fisherman.



Al and one of his Dwarf Cars *(Jim Greenwood collection)*