

Pete Lovely

Fast, smooth, consistent and smart, Pete Lovely is the most prolific and accomplished driver to come out of the Pacific Northwest. Amazingly enough, his racing career both predates *and* continues on after the 21-year period covered by this two-volume set of Pacific Northwest Racing History.

After a hot-rodded boyhood in Montana and a stint as a warplane mechanic in World War Two, Pete returned to the Northwest and began a three-year stint racing roadsters at many long lost ovals in the region.

Pete was one of that intrepid group that formed the first starting grids for the Gray Field events in 1951, driving an ultra-slow Renault. He soon got hold of a Jaguar XK120 where he did much better. He then raced the Jag for a couple of years at other early Northwest road racing facilities, hooking up in some memorable duels with Ray Hansen's Mercury Special among others.

After working with early Seattle foreign car dealerships, Pete established his own service shop and VW dealership in the Rainier Valley, where "Team Empire" was formed. Several years later, he moved further south to Fife, where his VW dealership was easily visible along the I-5 Freeway.

Pete and others developed the famous Porsche-powered Cooper Streamliner, known commonly as the "Pooper" for the 1955 season. Pete had many memorable outings in the car including winning the national SCCA under-1500cc modified class championship

Pete drove a variety of cars during the late 50s, including two Ferraris, a Corvette prototype at Sebring, and a ubiquitous Lotus 11 in which he won many northwest events. Nationally he is still remembered for winning the first feature race ever at the famed Laguna Seca Raceway, this was in 1956 behind the wheel of a two-litre Ferrari 500 Test Rossa owned by Fred Armbruster

A short European tour with Lotus led to an invitation for Pete to join the Lotus Formula One team, but after another short stint in Europe Pete had to return to the Northwest—there just wasn't enough money in Formula One racing back then!

Returning to the northwest, he continued to race extensively locally and nationally. He occasionally teamed with Californian Jack Nethercutt in Nethercutt's Ferrari 250 Testa Rossa, including the 1960 Sebring 12 Hours where the team got a third place finish.

As the *Long Straights and Hairpins Turns* era came to an end, Pete was burning up the Northwest tracks in the famous Cooper-Ferrari hybrid, a car that could not race officially but won most of them unofficially anyway, and was invariably the fastest thing out there.

In the 60s, Pete continued for a while in the Cooper-Ferrari, drove many other cars, started a new family, and was the last of the true privateers in Grand Prix Racing. He and his wife Nevele now can often be seen around the country at vintage races where Pete still can turn a very fast lap.

Where does Pete Lovely sit in the hierarchy of Pacific Northwest racing drivers? Only Jerry Grant accomplished as much, and no one has had a longer career. Some of his contemporaries say of Pete that he never seemed hell-bent on winning, apparently enjoying the racing experience more than being consumed by a passion for victory. Well, he beat them often enough for all of that.