

Ralph Ormsbee

Either in his own car or in a borrowed ride, ex-WWTwo torpedo bomber pilot Ralph Ormsbee raced some of the iconic cars of the 1950s. The Pooper, Lotus 9, 11, and 15 models; and the Chev-HWM all were at one time or another in the capable hands of Mr. Ormsbee. Ralph is one of the many who started out in a MGTD; his first outing was way back in 1952 at Shelton. When he bought the car from a Seattle dealer, the salesman told him about the race, and got him a helmet. "I was pretty disappointed in the race – I could only get up to 70 mph! I did some work on the car but soon got a Porsche America into which I dropped a Super engine, but the car was not that good—Porsches were unreliable then. I've never liked them since." Next was Formula Three, Ralph was one of the Northwest gang that included Tom Meehan and George Keck that raced the little open-wheeled cars all over the West Coast. Next came a bob-tailed Cooper Climax 1100cc and then a move up to the Chev-HWM, which Ralph still claims had the best engine he ever ran—but the car was notoriously unreliable. He traded that HWM for a Lotus 15, a 1.5-litre model. "I put Webers on it, took the SUs off...it was a great car. Very light and I loved to beat the Porsches with it." Ralph quit racing because he was moving up as an engineer at Boeing and could not devote the time to the sport. He traded the 15 for a Lotus Elite and took up motorcycles and flying for speed thrills. Ralph passed away in 2015.