

Stan Burnett and the Burnett Specials

Before he tragically lost his life in a practice accident in 1971, Renton's Stan Burnett challenged all comers in big-bore cars of his own making. "He loved to race", read the obituary in the local sports section, and to that could be added, "in his own cars."

The first Burnett Special was a somewhat rough, front engined, Chevy powered Devin-based model, which Burnett brought to the track unheralded in the middle of the 1960 season, immediately making a splash by jumping right into the feature events and pushing the big boys from the green flag on.

Burnett continued this pattern for the rest of his career, always near or at the top, with one of his own creations. If all that was needed was dedication, skill, and speed, Burnett would have won a lot of races, but bad luck and poor budgets seemed to plague him. His one experience driving for someone else produced mixed results. The Ferrari he drove for Dick Hahn in 1963 was unsuited for local tracks and did not meet the expectations that the owner and driver had for the car.

Through the 1960s and into that last fatal year of 1971 there were three Burnetts, plus one that was built for Don Jensen. After the first front-engined model the next three were rear engined.

Burnett was born in Hewett, Minnesota, moving to Seattle as a young boy with his family and he grew up in Renton. He worked as a foreman in a tools/machinery company and had tremendous talent as a designer and builder. One of the most popular drivers on the scene, Burnett had a young family when he was killed.

Racing had been a family and friends affair for Burnett, with all hands chipping in to build the cars and to get them ready at the races. His father was at the track the day of his fatal accident.

Burnett's cars were more efficient and brutal than pretty, but they ran and handled right up there just below the very top Group 7 CanAm cars of which he was trying to race at the end. He did win several regional class championships and feature races, and came

in second at the Runoffs at Riverside in 1968 after leading for several laps. Many racing photos from the 1960s have one of Burnett's distinctive cars, either in his own hands or those of Don Jensen in the lead as the field thunders off the starting line.

One of the big local races he did win was the 1968 Rose Cup, after a great race-long duel with Tony Settember. Many other times he had a "big race" well in hand only to have a mechanical breakdown near the end. But nothing except his last accident ever dimmed his enthusiasm for racing.