

Jerry Grant

A certain tall, thin, older gentlemen with a full head of dark hair and a sweet smile that you see at northwest vintage races once a year might not get your attention—even if you once raced with him. You have to look closer at his eyes to see that this is a new incarnation of Jerry Grant, the Northwest's most accomplished drivers from the 60s. Grant raced with a high level of success in almost every form of motor racing available during his days, including Indy Cars, NASCAR stock cars, TransAms, sports cars, drag racing and off-road. In local races, he won numerous feature events and set lap records virtually everywhere he competed.

Growing up in Seattle, Grant ran with a pack of hot rodders who naturally enough got into drag racing, some of it legal. Grant was soon bored with drag racing and wanted to add some turns to spice things up, so he showed up in a rodded-up Ford coupe at a sports car race at Shelton Airport in 1955 and was actually allowed to race. After a couple of years in the service, Grant's next car was a step up, but not by much. He acquired a Ford roaster in which he ran in several races while demonstrating his ample driving ability. His burly, prematurely bald appearance and determined, almost defiant look gave him an intimidating persona that helped him on the track.

Dick Hahn purchased a 3-litre Ferrari for Grant to drive in the 1960 season. It was not always easy, but in won-lost rankings, Grant and the Hahn Ferrari were dominant in Northwest races, winning 38 times in the Hahn Ferrari. He was soon traveling to California to race and did well enough to attract attention there. He drove a new Ferrari model for Hahn in 1962 with more success, but by then it was obvious that the Ferraris Hahn loved were no longer going to be competitive with the new rear-engined sportsracers coming out. Gant and Hahn parted ways and he raced in Lolas and a Lotus 19-Buick for such sponsors as Allen Green and Bardahl over the next few years. Grant then had the high honor of being asked to join Dan Gurney's team. He moved to Southern California and raced around the country and in Europe with Gurney's team for several more seasons. By the mid-60s Grant was no longer a part of the Northwest racing scene, although he returned regularly for big races and occasionally dropped in to take part in regional events when his bigger commitments would allow. His qualifying runs at events like the USRRC and NWGP were always exciting. Grant invariably turned in the fastest qualifying run on Saturday but his car would not make the full distance on Sunday.

Jerry Grant recently passed away while living in Southern California.