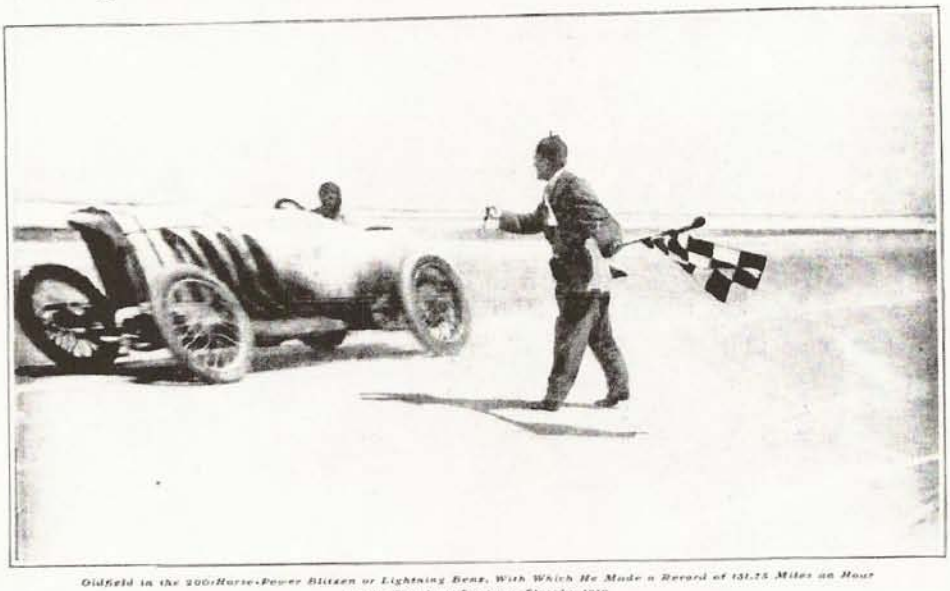
# WIDE OPEN ALL THE WAY

## By Barney Oldfield—Reported by William F. Sturm



Oldfield in the 200-Horse-Power Blitzen or Lightning Boat, With Which He Made a Record of 131.75 Miles an Hour on the Beach at Daytona, Florida, 1910

EARLY in the racing game I had been drawn to it by the thrill of the thing. I loved applause, loved to hear the growl of a big racing motor, loved the thrill of cheating death at the turns. But those things were passing for me now more or less. I admit it. It was for this reason there arose the feeling that I disliked competition. I did not. But I was interested in the money-making angle. I found that people would pay for thrills. I was willing to exchange my thrill making for their money. If I rode with death at my elbow I insisted on the cold hard cash. I found that I could make a good deal of money out of match races. It was safer to drive with one other man on the track than with ten. My name was valuable to the promoter, just as any champion's would be. I insisted on bonuses and guaranties, and got them. It is the goal of every race driver, boxer and others in the field of sport to be so important that he can tell the promoter what he will do, not have the promoter tell him what he has to do.

At the Denver meeting, where I stopped on my way to the Coast, I got 50 per cent of the gross, which netted me about $600; this without much advertising of any sort. I did not know a day before that I was going to stop off there. The San Francisco Auto Club paid me $1750 for driving there. At Los Angeles I was paid a $1500 bonus and $400 for breaking the track record. In various other California towns, San Jose, Fresno, San Bernardino, San Diego—I imagine I averaged about $500 or $600 a race meet. In this paragraph I am referring to the fall of 1903, when I was driving the Wintons. As all my expenses and the car expenses were paid, these figures netted me considerable. They don't sound so large today, but remember that the expenses, though considered high then, were nothing like what they are today.

### A Season of Smash-Ups

I HAD been called a fool, a madman and several other less complimentary appellations. Folks said I didn't know what I was doing. Charlie Van Loan, the story writer, and my good friend, used to ask me every year when I came to the Coast when I was going to quit racing. I always told him that I was going to quit when I had made a little more money. I didn't really intend to stay in the business until they picked me up in a dustpan and the papers came out the next day extolling my good qualities and forgetting my bad ones.

Charlie always followed up our conversation with a big feature in the Los Angeles paper for which he wrote, telling the world how modest I was, how I admitted that there were other good drivers besides myself, how I planned to quit the following year, and how I would keep on saying that until finally I was killed.

I knew that the law of averages made my life one of constant danger. The prize fighter may go on forever. He runs little chance of getting killed. He also is bound to collect something for his efforts. That isn't so with the automobile racer. He isn't sure of anything, except eventually of getting killed if he stays at the game long enough.

Frankly, unless something gave way over which I had no control, I had no doubt of my ability to handle a car. Fences never worried me. I had missed hundreds of them by narrow margins. I don't say I was calloused. But I do say that danger, as danger, was not in my lexicon.

Webb Jay and his steamer caused my downfall at Chicago on May 30, 1905. Webb's Whistling Billy finished the ten miles ahead of me in the good time of nine minutes forty-nine seconds. I had driven the distance faster than that at other times, but not this time.

From Chicago I went to Minneapolis, where we raced on July eighth. Earl Kiser was there, and he had beaten some of my records in the past year and was trailing around with the title of "champion race driver of America" tacked on behind his name. Webb Jay and his whistling White steamer made the fastest mile, 55⅘ seconds. I took the five-mile event in 4.41⅘ and Earl Kiser took the ten-mile in 10.35.

Before and After the 1914 Los Angeles to Phoenix Cactus Derby

As I recall it, I first met Louis Chevrolet at this meet. Louis was driving Major Miller's Fiat. Louis and I began a friendship then that has continued to this day. We later were to have many bitter races and at more than one time bitter words. But that was all in the racing game. I never believed in letting anyone run over me, and neither did Louis.

With increased participation in racing by a greater and greater number of drivers, it was inevitable that we should have more accidents. In the summer of 1905 we had three serious smashes that shook all our nerves and caused two of the drivers to quit because of injuries and another to quit because he grew tired of the dangers and the strain of contesting on dirt tracks.

The first smash occurred in Detroit. We were racing there on August eighth—Charlie Burman in his Peerless Blue Streak, Dan Wurgis in a Red Redbird, Webb Jay in his White steamer and myself in the Green Dragon. Burman and Wurgis had mile-a-minute cars, while Jay's old Whistling Billy didn't care how fast it went. My car was good for a mile in fifty-six or fifty-seven seconds on that track. We got away in good shape, but the Dragon began to miss on a turn. This slowed me up and permitted Wurgis a chance to go around me. He didn't swing wide enough, and his left front wheel hooked my right rear. He threw me around, headed straight for the inside fence. I went right through it. Wurgis shot off in the opposite direction, taking down part of the outside fence. When I came to I still had the steering wheel in my hands, but the rest of the car was on ahead of me and the steering wheel about 100 feet.

### More Than Two Miles a Minute

A WEEK later to the day Earl Kiser was competing with me at Cleveland, driving my old Winton Bullet. The Bullet wasn't wrongly named, for it was so fast Earl couldn't hold it on the turns, and he was a real driver too. Going around the turn, Earl was a little slow in straightening out, and his car headed for the inside fence. When we got to him he had one leg smashed to a pulp and was otherwise badly injured. He recovered and we staged a couple of benefit races for him, one of which, at Dayton, I remember, netted him something more than $2000. Earl and I had plenty of speed arguments on the track and both of us had said some things about the other's records. But when he got hurt that stuff all vanished in the air. I drove in several benefit races for him and I know he would have done the same for me.

A week later Webb Jay and his steam car, Charlie Burman in his Blue Streak and I got together at Buffalo. Jay hit the turn in a cloud of dust, plunged through the fence and came to a stop in a pond three feet deep forty feet beyond. He had nine broken ribs, a badly crushed leg and concussion of the brain. He got well, stayed out of the racing game for a while, but now confines his racing to speed boats down at Miami.

Alfred Vanderbilt was still enthusiastic about beach records. In the fall of 1905 he came out with a statement that he had decided to build a 250-horse-power racer, engage the Italian Sartori to drive it and go to the Florida beaches and do a mile in thirty seconds. I thought then that Vanderbilt was all wrong about a heavy car, and I said so. I always believed that a light car of high horse power was what was needed. Vanderbilt never built the car, and I always said a man could not control it going at 120 miles an hour. Yet a few years later I was to drive a car on the

# WIDE OPEN ALL THE WAY

Continued from Page 11

opener, so when Opportunity knocked in that letter from Cooper I jerked the door open so quickly that she almost fell on her nose in the middle of the room. I reached Detroit with a big appetite and not much money.

Together, Ford, Cooper, Spider Huff and I labored over the two racing cars, one of which at least was to win the crown of American champion. When folks talk of Henry Ford's stupendous business acumen and nerve today, I always think of the beginning of the twentieth century, when he decided to defeat Winton, a power in the automobile world, though Ford himself was an unsung builder of homemade racing cars.

The cars were in the last stages of completion when I got on the job. This isn't intended as an alibi for what happened. One was painted yellow and had the legend "Tom Cooper" painted on the side of the seat. The other was painted red and had the name "Henry Ford" painted on the side of its seat.

I might add that these two cars didn't make Mr. Ford or Mr. Cooper famous overnight. Instead, they missed the mark by a good margin. They didn't resemble the present-day automobile much in construction.

As I recall it, they had no transmission or differential, as we know them today. They had a wooden-block clutch inside the flywheel, thus locking the main drive shaft to the crank shaft. This clutch was much like the clutch used on the belt shafts in a machine shop today. We didn't have any reverse gear in the car, of course, since we had no selective transmission. We had only one speed forward, for the same reason. Further, the cars were innocent of any springs in the rear.

For a carburetor, we had what is known as a mixer: that is, the gasoline was forced through a fine screen to vaporize it. At first we had a separate suction pump fastened to each cylinder for the purpose of forcing the gas into that particular cylinder. I have always thought that Ford's idea on this was the first application of one carburetor per cylinder, which became universal racing practice in 1922 and 1923, only to give way to one carburetor when the supercharger came on the scene in 1924. We had a vertical steering post on which was a twenty-eight-inch cross arm with short vertical handles on each end. This was the car which was to startle the world before the year 1902 came to a close.

Our radiator, or cooler, as it was often called, was stuck up on the front of the car, in the same relative position as it is today, except that it was a huge affair, higher than it was wide and it was entirely exposed to the air instead of being inclosed in a radiator shell. The oil of the present-day car is all carried in the crank case, which is directly under the motor. The oiling is all done mechanically or automatically, either by the forced-feed system or by the splash system.

But we did things differently in those days. I forgot to mention that our cars were four-cylinder, with a seven-inch bore and a seven-inch stroke, which Ford said

(Continued on Page 52)

(Continued from Page 50)

made them eighty horse power. We had a sight-feed oiler on each of the cylinders—that is, a glass tube with oil in it, such as is seen on slow-moving machinery today. The oil ran out as fast as it had the opportunity. It really was not such a bad system in those days, with our slow-speed racing engines—engines which turned over only 850 times a minute. The crank shaft—the shaft in the automobile to which all connecting rods are fastened—was not inclosed in the motor base, as it is today, but was all out in the open, ready to catch any dust or mud that might be in the air. We oiled the motor just as the locomotive engineer oils his steel today—by squirting oil on it with a long-snouted oil can.

When we got ready to try out our product, Ford, Cooper, Huff and I towed one of them out to the Grosse Pointe mile racing track, to the east of Detroit. I got out the oil can and squirted the crank shaft and other parts. I filled the sight-feed oilers, as any good mechanic and general handy man was supposed to do. Then I cranked up. The car spit a few times, but that was about all. We did get it to move a little. My whole life might have been changed if that car had performed satisfactorily. But it didn't. Ford was disgusted. Tom Cooper must have shared his disgust. But me—I was too green to share their feelings. Just because the car wouldn't run, I didn't think it was the end of the world.

It would be foolish for me to say that I could remember Ford's words. I don't. But I do know that later he offered to sell Cooper the two cars for something like $600 or $800. I believe if he had said twice that amount I would have tried to get hold of the money. Tom and a hurried around and managed to borrow it. These two prehistoric racing cars cost us very little more than a set of eight connecting rods for a present-day racer.

Cooper and I took the two cars back to the shop and with Huff went to work on them. While busy on this job we got word from two old bicycle-racing friends of ours, Carl Fisher, down at Indianapolis, and Karl Kiser, of Dayton, Ohio, that they were putting on a racing exhibition at Dayton and we could get in on 25 per cent of the receipts if we would come down.

### *The Fastest Thing on Wheels*

This is the same Carl Fisher who today is a great financial genius. At that time Carl was just getting interested in the automobile business. He was a born promoter. He had the promoter's make-up that permitted him to take a long chance to gain an end. A few years later, in company with James A. Allison, F. H. Wheeler and A. C. Newby, he opened a small factory in Indianapolis for the manufacture of the gas confined in tanks, which changed automobile lighting from coal oil to gas. In 1909 he and his friends had another great vision and they built the Indianapolis motor speedway. They were a little better fixed financially when they built the speedway, but they took an awful chance. But it was a great success, just as the gas-making plant was.

After making the speedway popular Fisher became interested in good roads. He was one of the original sponsors of the Lincoln Highway, giving heavily of his time and money. After he were out Indianapolis promotion possibilities, he went down to Miami, Florida. He bought a big tract of land along the beach—in reality a low-lying peninsula, covered with a mangrove swamp infested with mosquitoes, bears, rattlesnakes, alligators and wildcats. His friends began to make plans to put him into the bughouse. The idea of buying a mangrove swamp along the ocean! To make a long story very short, Carl cut the mangroves, got dredges and sucked the sand from the ocean to fill over the mangrove stubs. The result is Miami Beach. Carl wasn't so foolish, after all.

We shipped our two cars down to Dayton. Spider Huff was to drive, and I believe Cooper was going to ride with him to help operate the spark controls and other doodads. Automobile racing was still a novelty. We didn't have to do much to satisfy the crowd. It was at this meet that my car first got its name, 999. For publicity purposes, Carl had announced it as faster than anything on wheels. I imagine he got the name from the fast locomotive 999 which I think pulled the Empire State Express at that time. This engine was also the fastest thing on wheels.

The yellow car with Cooper's name on it was rolled out onto the track. I gave it a few squirts of oil and wiped my hands with waste, as any real mechanic should. Then we cranked. No answer. We cranked again. Ditto.

The promoter of the meet began to get nervous. He came around to Tom, who was the boss of the outfit.

"Tom," he said, "I don't want to give these people their money back, but I am going to if we can't give them an exhibition. Maybe if this car won't run, the red car will."

Tom turned to Huff and me.

"Boys," he said, "that old 999 has to live up to its name. It just has to run today."

The red car didn't look much like the streamline racing cars of today. The big oblong radiator stood up in front, obscuring the view of everything except the wheels, which were of wire. There was no body on the racer, as we know bodies today—nothing but a flat bed, as near as I can describe it. There was only one seat, and that for the driver.

### *My First Driving*

We cranked up and the red car sputtered a couple of times and then quit cold. We couldn't get the gasoline to the mixer fast enough. As head mechanic, self-appointed, I decided that what we needed was air pressure on the gasoline tank. So I cut a hole in the tank, taped a piece of rubber hose in the hole and got busy. I was glad then that I had developed my lungs by riding a bicycle, for I needed plenty of bellows.

The three of us got aboard the car, Huff in the driver's seat, Cooper hanging on to the right of him and me behind them. I stuck the hose in my mouth and blew. The old girl perked up considerably when she got the gas fast enough. Around the track we sailed, with me blowing like a cyclone to keep the air pressure up, Spider Huff at the tiller bar and Tom fumbling around the various controls.

The meet wasn't a howling success, but we made Henry Ford's racing car run more than it ever had run before. That blowing scheme of mine, I think, was really the advance guard of the air-pressure gasoline feed which is used on many high-grade cars of today. It is an absolute necessity on racing cars.

I can't imagine that the promoters were overjoyed at the meet. Cooper and I made about fifteen or twenty dollars.

The two cars were loaded onto a flat car and shipped to Toledo, my home town. I wasn't a bit proud, and I borrowed a vacant storeroom from a friend of mine and we went to work. With the help of a coppersmith, we redesigned an old intake manifold and the mixing pot, which I have explained was the ancestor of the present carburetor.

While we were getting the cars in shape we heard of a big race meet that was to be held at the Grosse Pointe track at Detroit. We decided that since we were in the automobile racing game, we would enter. We didn't know our cars would run, but we sent in our entry just the same. The meet was to be a two-day affair. We shipped the 999 by boat. Cooper was tired and went to bed as soon as we got into Detroit. Huff and I got the racer off the boat and then looked up Hot-Dog John's lunch wagon. We had known John for quite a while; in fact, we had borrowed a great many sandwiches from John in the days we had spent in Detroit. We ate a couple of sandwiches while we were telling him we needed his horse to tow our car out of the congested district.

John drove his wagon home and brought his horse back. It was about daylight when we got to the wharf and hitched the nag to 999. We used the horse because we were afraid to run the car in the downtown district. We didn't have any exhaust pipe leading back to the tail of the car. Instead, the exhausts came out on the side of the motor and sounded like the Battle of Vimy Ridge when we cranked up. We used John's horse for power until we got out East Jefferson Avenue a little way. Then we turned the horse loose and cranked up. We arrived at the race track without any further adventure.

I watched Huff drive around the track a few times. I made up my mind it was about time for me to try my hand, since I had a working interest in the car. Up to the present time I had never known the thrill of holding the tiller bar as the car moved under its own power.

"Why don't you let me drive the car?" I asked Huff. "I believe I can drive it. I've been round it enough to know how to do it."

"All right," he told me. "I don't know what Cooper will say, but he's asleep."

I got out the old oil can and oiled up. I was so nervous I could hardly get into the seat! But the minute I got settled all my nervousness left me. That has been one of my characteristics throughout my driving career. In fact, any driver who does not feel calm when he is going into action can't be a good driver. I had supreme confidence in my ability. I had come by this confidence through my bicycle and motorcycle racing, for in the good old days of hooking handle bars on the small board tracks it behooved every rider to believe that he was just a little bit smarter and had a little more nerve than the other fellow. Huff cranked the car and hopped on behind me. Away we went. Slowly at first, then faster and faster. I liked the heart-tightening as I came to the curve of the track and leaned over, as I used to lean in my bicycle days and on the motorcycle racing tandem at Salt Lake City. This was the life!

When I stopped the car and got off I knew that I could handle the car better than Huff or Cooper. That wasn't egotism; for Cooper, who had arrived at the track, said, "Take her out again, Barney. I believe you can get more speed out of her than either of us; and if we're going to beat Winton and his Bullet this afternoon in that match race, you're the boy to do it."

### *A Red-Letter Day*

We had entered in the Manufacturers' Challenge Cup race, but in Tom's mind and mine the race was a match affair against the world's champion driver. There might be others in the race, but Alexander Winton was the undisputed champion of the dirt tracks, and he was the man we were going to try to beat. So I practiced some more. The more rounds of the mile track I made, the more I was convinced that I was the master of the 999.

Alexander Winton was a great amateur sportsman. The automobile world owes a lot to him. He was part of the advance guard of the racing clan as it is today. He had money to spend on a hobby and he did it to advertise the automobile company of the same name.

William Metzger, one of the promoters of the meet, came to us with a proposition that if we drove a mile faster than Winton he would give us $200 in cash in addition to any cups we might win. Metzger at that time owned an automobile store and garage in Detroit. Later he became one of the moving spirits in the Everitt-Metzger-Flanders corporation.

That $200 was a lot of money. I made up my mind that there was nothing I would not do to help win it. It meant a fortune to Cooper and me. What couldn't we do with all that cash?

The afternoon of October 23, 1902, will be my red-letter day forever. Later on I was to win bigger races, to get more publicity, perhaps, but not the same thrill that came to me then.

One of my friends came up to me just before the race and said, "You better be careful, Barney; you're liable to get killed."

"I might as well be dead as dead broke," I answered. Of course I did not mean that literally. For I had been broke so often that I should have felt uncomfortable if I hadn't been.

There were six races on the program, but Cooper and I had entered only in the Manufacturers' Challenge Cup, a race of five miles. Our car was spoken of as the Cooper Arrow, or Special, 999. The cup had to be won three times by the same make of car for permanent possession. I won it three times, but not with the same car—once with the 999, once with the Winton Bullet and once with the Peerless Green Dragon. Webb Jay took permanent possession of it by winning it three times with his steam car, Whistling Billy.

The first race was for machines of five horse power. The contestants drove Oldsmobiles and Elmores and the winner's time was seven minutes fifty seconds—really very good time. The second race was a five-mile owners' handicap, the third the race for steam cars, and the ten-mile handicap was fourth.

### *Getting a Fast Start*

Then came the five-mile Manufacturers' Challenge Cup. Henry Ford knew that Tom Cooper and I had decided to go after the race right from the start. He tried to persuade me that it was certain death for me to attempt to drive as fast as would be necessary in order to compete successfully against Winton.

While he talked I anointed the crankshaft bearings with oil. Then I dropped some in the cylinder oil cups. I got up into the seat. Barney Oldfield, daring race driver! Barney Oldfield in a race against world's champion Alexander Winton! My heart was pumping like a fire engine on the third alarm. I admit it. My chest was swelled tight, but a tight chest wouldn't do me any good when I got going. I'm trying to tell you that I knew that too.

I felt for my spark lever down at the right of the seat. It was there all right. Then I fingered the thumbscrew on the left side that regulated the gasoline flow; it was still there too. The clutch pedal wasn't a pedal at all but a long iron hand lever, and we got under way by letting the clutch slip, just as a person would have to do today if he started his car in high gear. As soon as we got up a little speed we quit slipping the clutch, and we were all set.

The crowd began to yell for the race. So we lined up—Alexander Winton, in his Winton Bullet; Shanks, Winton Pup; Buckman, Geneva steamer; White, White steamer; and I at the tiller bar of the 999. We got under way with a short rolling start.

I had the outside and I knew that to defeat Winton I should have to drive for all I was worth. So I started fast. The starter called us back, but I went around the track for two miles before I knew what he wanted. We lined up again and I did better in getting away.

The rest of the cars forged ahead of me in the short run we were making before we reached the starting tape. I speeded up in order to reach the tape at the same time they did. Furthermore, though I hadn't done it purposely, I had had to put on so much speed to catch up with the field that when we all crossed the tape together I was moving much faster than anyone else. That gave me a better start. I used that plan scores of times afterward, before any starter caught on to what an advantage it gave me. When they discovered it they used to make us all start over again. The other drivers soon learned of it and more than once they got away with it. Sometimes I profited by it and sometimes it was someone else.

(Continued on Page 54)

(Continued from Page 52)

I hit the first turn at a rapid clip. The regular procedure on coming to a turn had always been to shut off. I knew that. So I decided not to do it. Instead, I opened my throttle as wide as it would go. I wasn't exactly sure what was going to happen, but I knew I had to go faster than Winton. I had won a lot of bicycle races by taking a chance, so I decided to do the same here.

Put yourself in my place. I didn't know anything about automobile racing. I managed to get in the middle of the track and I stayed there throughout the race. I slid all the way around the first turn, the 999 trying to jerk away from me and go straight ahead through the outside fence. The rear wheels insisted on getting ahead of the front ones. I used to stop skids on the bicycle by turning the front wheel in the direction of the skid, so I jerked the tiller bar of my racer so as to point the front wheels toward the outer fence. The idea worked! I shoved that bunch of wood and iron where to head in! I got out of the curve and into the back stretch.

### *Helping to Make Mr. Ford*

When I reached the second turn I went right on into it, using the same tactics I had on the first one. I certainly got a few thrills jerking that car around and putting her now where I wanted it. No bunch of iron and wood was going to tell me to unload! I kept this up for five miles. I really had got so interested in getting around the corners that I didn't pay much attention to anyone else on the track. Some of my friends told me afterward that I scared the other participants and the spectators half to death by my crazy driving.

I finished a half mile ahead of Winton; though in justice to him, I don't believe his car was running as well as it should have. But the way I felt that day I hardly believe he could have beaten me, regardless of how his car was running. Some people might call this conceit. I call it self-confidence. You don't get far with conceit in any game; but with self-confidence to back up nerve and ability you will always get some place. I am not boasting, but in one of those "I" stories you have to use a good many first personal pronouns.

Mr. Ford rushed out on the track at the conclusion of the race. Coming over to me he shouted, "I'll build another car for you, Barney, and we'll challenge the world with it!"

The crowd rushed out on the track and made much of my victory. As for me, naturally I felt pretty good about it.

Years after this first race a salesman called on Ford to sell him some parts. The salesman didn't get the order, and he wanted to rub something in on him, so in the conversation he said, "Mr. Ford, don't you think that Barney Oldfield helped to make you?"

Mr. Ford replied, "Yes, Barney helped to make me and I helped to make Barney Oldfield."

The salesman afterward told me the story. When I saw Ford I said to him, "Henry, that is very nice of you to tell people that I helped make you and you helped make me, and if it is a fact I want to tell you that I did a much better job of making than you did."

There I was at twenty-four. I had made a good start in the automobile racing business by defeating America's best-known driver.

I immediately began to get record hungry. Why couldn't I better Winton's world's mile record of 1:02⅕ on a mile dirt track? The more Cooper and I discussed it, the surer I was that it could be done. I knew that the Grosse Pointe track at Detroit was too soft at the turns to make the record possible then, so we decided to wait until the ground was frozen.

November 28, 1902, was the date decided on; but the officials' automobile got stuck on the way out and the sun was up when they arrived. They did get there in time to see me hit a turn at full speed, lose all control of the car and spin around like a top three or four times. F. E. Castle, who was present, asked me the next day if he and a group of friends could take out some life insurance on me, provided they gave 25 per cent of the proceeds to my estate. I said that I didn't care. They had figured I was sure to get killed when I tried for the record. The insurance company was figuring the same way, too, so they didn't get the insurance. I didn't try any more that day, however, as the track was too soft.

Meantime Cooper told me I ought to try for the straightaway record, which was then held by Fournier, the Frenchman, I believe. We made the attempt outside of Detroit, but the best I could do was a mile in 52⅘ seconds, against Fournier's record of 51⅘, also made in this country.

The track looked right for our second attempt on Winton's record on December first. The day before, Bill Perrett, Detroit representative for a tire company, came to me with a proposition.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Barney," he said. "Our factory can get a lot of good advertising out of the fact that you used our tires if you break Winton's record. If you do, I'll give you $250; if you don't, you won't get a red cent."

That sounded fine to me, and I told him I would accept his proposition.

We got the officials together before daylight the morning of December first and went out to the track. They had been appointed by the American Automobile Association, in order to make the trials official.

Cooper and I dumped the gasoline in 999, oiled her up and made a preliminary lap to see how conditions were. The track was smooth and frozen hard. The air was very cold, and I knew this would have some effect on the carburetors. We took torches and heated them up just before we started. I decided to go for the five-mile record first. I got away with a flying start and finished in five minutes twenty-one seconds, seven seconds faster than the record I had established in October. Then I tried it again and the timers caught me in five minutes twenty seconds. My first mile was clocked in 1:01⅖, which was a world's record, though it was not allowed by the American Automobile Association for some reason I have forgotten now. I wanted to try for the ten-mile record, but the sun had come up and the track was getting soft, so we decided against the attempt.

### *A Two-Dollar-a-Day Job*

The first thing I did when I got back to town was to remind Bill Perrett of that $250. But he refused to pay until the records were given an O. K. by the American Automobile Association. I wanted to go back to Toledo for the winter. I borrowed twenty dollars from Tom Cooper, paid $1.50 for my railroad ticket and went home, paid a grocery bill and was once more broke.

By this time I had learned a powerful lesson in finance. That was that a smart driver could get appearance money, bonuses and various other items, not a part of the prize list, if he knew how to do it. I confess that in after years I was an adept on that score. Without these perquisites, indeed, I don't know how I should ever have made the financial grade.

George Trout, superintendent of the Yale Automobile Company, in Toledo, told me I could have a job in his assembling room, but that he could not give me $2.50 a day, which he paid only for skilled mechanics. He could, however, pay me two dollars a day. The world's automobile record-holder working for two dollars a day! That sounds like a fine joke now. If someone today were to attempt to employ any one of twenty automobile race drivers I might name he would have to start talking wages at ten times my pay. But I took the job. I rode one of my racing bicycles to work, with a dinner pail clanking from my handlebars. Evidently I wasn't very high-hatty in those days!

My hands began to itch for the tiller bar, and early in the spring of 1903 I went to Detroit to talk things over with Billy Hurlburt, something of an automobile engineer. Together we designed a new mixing pot, which we copied from the one-cylinder Cadillac of that period. If I may be pardoned, I want to tell what we did to improve the 999. It will interest those who know automobiles.

We did away with the suction intake valves and put on valves that worked mechanically. We did this by using two sets of bevel gears, attaching one set to the crank shaft in front of the motor and running another short shaft up to the top of the motor, where we had another set of bevel gears that attached to an overhead cam shaft. These bevel gears were of the cheapest kind, being of cast iron. The brackets to hold the gears and the shafting also were made of cast iron.

### *Daring Chauffeurs*

We governed the speed of the engine by moving the cam shaft back and forth, the cams being cut on a bevel, which would permit of the inlet valves being opened or closed according to the speed desired. The mixing pot, or what is now known as the carburetor, had a fixed opening, and there was no throttle valve, as in present cars. This overhead valve equipment made the cars much faster. We changed our ignition system, installing a stronger battery, and put on two commutators, one a secondary and one a primary, we advanced and retarded our spark through the primary commutator. I went back to Toledo, convinced that we had put a lot more hop into the car.

Cooper and I went back to Detroit in April of 1903 to get ready for the racing season. We fixed Cooper's original yellow car up just as we did my 999. Resolved to get all out of racing there was in it, we engaged Glenn Stuart, the Kalamazoo cyclery king, as our manager. He immediately demonstrated his worth by signing a contract for me to appear at the Empire City track, Yonkers, New York, on Memorial Day, while Cooper was billed to appear at Indianapolis in a meet promoted by Carl Fisher. It runs in my mind that the paint scheme was changed on Cooper's car and that Stuart then renamed it the Red Devil, which was the title under which it raced from then on.

Charles Wridgeway, formerly of London, driving a Peerless racing car, was to be my opposition at Yonkers. His car was one of two made by the Peerless company for entrance in the James Gordon Bennett Cup race in Ireland. It was said to be of eighty horse power. My 999 was of about the same power.

The newspapers were full of press-agent stories before the race telling how the daring chauffeurs would risk their necks in an effort to win applause and cash. They always called us chauffeurs in those days.

The match race between Wridgeway and myself was to be in three heats. The New York papers, in instancing how much interest there was in the race, stated that by actual count there were 219 automobiles on the grounds!

I won the first two heats, which were of five miles, so the third heat was not run. Incidentally, my manager, Stuart, had made a good contract for me. I was to receive 25 per cent of the receipts. There were said to have been 6000 spectators, which was quite a crowd in those days; but a lot of them must have come in on passes, for my share was something like $1300. But I did get a fine silver cup.

It was in the second mile of the second heat that I circled the track in 1:01⅘. This record, though not so good as the one I made in Detroit in December, was still a world's record, and especially good since it was made in competition. Wridgeway and I had been placed a half mile apart on the track in order that we might not endanger each other in starting or on the turns. Today twelve of America's fast flying little racers, all capable of more than 100 miles an hour, rush around the dirt tracks of the country. My best time for the five miles against Wridgeway was 5.31, not the equal of my previous five-mile record made in Detroit, but still pretty fair time. Here is the way the New York Herald of the day following described my driving:

"Down the stretch to the grand stand he came with such velocity that his car bounded, even on the floor-like track, and threw him many times several inches into the air from the seat to which he crouched. As he passed the massed spectators, gripping his lever with a hand of iron, staring straight ahead through the big black dust goggles, his dark hair streaming out behind him and his pale face set, he was as unfrozen dead with terror, a grotesquely masked corpse with eyes fixed on something flying object that had stopped the beating of his heart.

"A mighty cheer went up as he passed. Still, unyielding, while his machine bounded and plunged across the track to the outside fence, as though to dash itself and its daring driver to pieces, skillfully the slight man guided his mighty car, so that it all but touched the white fence, and then skimmed along to the point where unerring judgment told him he must make his turn across the turn. The slightest mistake in guiding the mechanism meant death, and the man was watched by thousands of fascinated eyes, while the speculation as to the nerve and skill that must be his to carry him to the end of his heartbreaking contest was high in every mind."

This race was notable because of the participation in it of a young man, Glenn Curtiss, on a motorcycle of his own manufacture. Curtiss later went into aviation and furnished airplanes for the United States during the World War and in the years that have followed.

While we raced at the Empire City track it was raining in Indianapolis, and the meet at the fair grounds there was postponed to a later date. Fisher sent me an invitation to be present on the postponed date and I went. On the way out there I stopped off at Toledo with some of the proceeds of the Empire track meet and paid off a chattel mortgage which father had had on the house for years.

### *A New Record for Indiana*

The postponed meet at Indianapolis finally was held on June nineteenth, at twentieth. I was to have plenty of competition, judging by the field entered. There was Tom Cooper and his Red Devil; Ed Kiser, who was one of the promoters and helped out his partner, Fisher, to the extent of participating, thus keeping the prize money in the family by driving the Pirate II; F. V. Dixon, of Cleveland, driving the General Scow; P. L. Thompson, of Detroit, Michigan, driving the Pirate I, a car being built by the Oldsmobile factory which had made many records at Ormond Beach, Florida, in the spring of the year.

If the reader will recall that Carl was a great promoter he won't be surprised at the good luck I had at this race meet. I was fiddling around with my car when he came up to me.

"Barney," he said, "why don't you try to bust a world's record right here in Indianapolis? We have record run and clear crops and record everything else. I don't see why you can't give us a dirt-track record."

"Well, Carl," I said, "I like to make records. You like to have records, so the world will know what a great little promoter you are."

Then I stopped talking for a while. Or came to bat right away.

"There's $250 in it for you if you circle this track in less than a minute," he told me.

(Continued on Page 59)

Continued from Page 54

"Just get hold of that $250 and hang it on the fence right down past the finish wire and I'll bet I collect it," was my answer to the bait.

Fisher went up into the judges' stand or the grand stand or some place and collected the money. I had never really let old 999 do her stuff under the proper conditions, but I felt that the day was about right and I decided to shoot the works.

I warmed my old record breaker up for a lap, and as I came into the home stretch I held up my hand as a signal that I was all set. I was wide open when I hit the starting tape and the fence on the turn jumped right out of the distance and rushed at me better than a mile a minute. I wasn't real sure I was going to make that first turn. I swung wide to the outside of the track as I got close, in order to give me a lot of room for making the turn. Cuffing the tiller sharply to the left as soon as I got the car's nose into the turn, I pulled the car right through a big cloud of dust. Coming into the back stretch, with all hood-back removed when I got her straightened out, the old girl actually jumped ahead.

### New Records With the 999

The second turn at the Indianapolis fair grounds isn't so good as the first one. I still ran wide open. I started to skid about as soon as I hit the turn and the dust rose in such a cloud that I really couldn't see very much. I couldn't see the outside fence, of course. I knew about where it ought to be and I figured that I was about due to smack it. I grabbed the tiller a little tighter and held on for the crash. But it didn't come. Before I knew it I was scooting down the home stretch, the dust was all behind me and I thundered over the finish line. I didn't need anyone to tell me how fast I had gone. I had been judging speed for months and I had a pretty good idea that I had made the lap under a minute. I made another slow lap and stopped at the wire.

Fisher rushed out with the money in a sack.

"There's your dough, Barney!" he yelled. "We got a world's record and you got $250. The time was 59" seconds."

Speaking of money, I might add that this meet netted Cooper and me less than $1000. Doesn't sound like so much in these days, but it was plenty of money then.

On July twenty-fifth at the Empire City track I managed to cut my Indianapolis time to 55⅝ seconds.

I had been giving racing a good deal of thought and I finally decided that I could make more money if I made a connection with some big factory instead of playing the lone-wolf role. That way I could get rid of the heavy expense. There were several factories that had begun to see the value and possibilities of racing. Among them were Winton, Oldsmobile, Peerless, Stearns, Packard, Locomobile, Rambler, Knox, to mention only some of them. Alexander Winton offered me a proposition that had possibilities in it. I was to drive for the Winton factory, my mount being Winton Bullet No. 2.

According to the terms of my contract, I was to receive a salary of $2500 a year, the Winton Company was to furnish me with the car and a mechanic and keep the car in repair. The factory also was to pay all transportation expenses. I was to pay my personal expenses and keep all the money I made in race-meet participation. It was a good contract for me. I couldn't see any reason on earth why I couldn't make as much money as the President of the United States.

I hated to part company with Tom Cooper, but I did it. He took my 999 and the Red Devil and went back to Henry Ford. I recall that I drove a match race against Cooper at the Grosse Pointe track, Detroit, later that summer. He drove one of our old cars and I drove the Winton Baby Bullet. Frank Day was obtained to drive the Red Devil for Cooper. He went through the fence with it at Milwaukee a few months later, killing himself and wrecking the car so that it was shipped back to the Ford factory and thrown on the junk pile. That was the end of Tom Cooper's original yellow car, or his Red Devil, as it afterward was called. There may have been a Red Devil racer after that, but it was not the original Red Devil.

So many people have asked me what became of the old 999 that I think this is a good place to tell its history to the best of my recollection. It got out of Cooper's hands some way and Lou Hausman came into possession of it, and Lou and I raced against each other in several match races through the South in 1904. In the fall of 1904, while I was driving at Salt Lake, I met Bill Pickens, who owned the 999 at that time. Bill and I made a deal whereby he was to manage me. He shipped the old car to Los Angeles ahead of us. When we arrived we went down to the freight house to get the car out and found that the charges were $165. We decided that perhaps it would be a good idea to let the railroad company keep the car. So we did it. Later, when it was sold to pay charges, the mayor of Venice, California, whose name was Dana Burke, bought it and hired Bruno Seibel, a well-known coast race driver, to repair it. One of the cylinders was broken. Seibel repaired it and took it to Pismo Beach to make some records, but failed. He campaigned it for a while, but it never did run satisfactorily. Bert Fuller drove it a while too. But the old car wasn't working any better for Bert, and finally it found its way back into Mayor Burke's barn.

Later on a fellow by the name of William Hughson bought it, after it had been stowed away in the barn for about three years. I remember this, because Hughson asked me to help him make it look like the 999 in its prime. I brought some photographs along and tried to help him. My recollection is that little more than the front and rear axles and the frame were left for Hughson to build around. I don't know what became of it after he dolled it all up.

I got a little ahead of my story in following the fortunes of my old record maker. My match race with Cooper, my old team mate, was in September of 1904. A tire on my Baby Bullet let go. It was a new experience with me—the first time that it had happened, in fact. I didn't distinguish anything different above the nose of my motor until the car let down on the corner all at once. The next instant I had crashed through the fence, killing a young chap by the name of Shearer. It was the first time I had figured in an accident of that kind. I knew it wasn't my fault, but I couldn't get it off my mind. At first I decided to quit racing. But I didn't quit, and the accident didn't affect my nerve, as they say in the fiction.

### Florida Beach Racing

Notice the newspapers after every race meet where a driver is killed or kills someone else. Immediately there is a report that this or that driver says it is his last race. But usually it isn't. I think the drivers really mean it at the time they say it. But the effect wears off. Racing gets in the blood. Drivers don't want to stop or don't seem able to stop. I'll wager I have decided to sell my cars and quit the track forever at least twenty times, but never have really quit under that impulse, for the reason above mentioned.

If I had been using my regular car, the Bullet No. 2, I do not believe the accident would have happened. But the big Bullet was in the shop for repairs, so I had to use the little four-cylinder job. I think I have failed to mention that Bullet No. 2 was an eight-cylinder-in-a-row job. I believe it was the second eight-in-a-row built in America, the Bullet No. 1 which Alexander Winton drove to so many records being the first.

In those early days millionaire drivers used to play with their cars a great deal down on the Florida beaches during the winter. They had set up quite a fine assortment of straightaway beach records and some records with a course that extended for ten miles up and down the beach, thus having a turn at each end. American cars had not yet taken the fancy of these beach habitues. I got the idea in my head that it would be a good advertisement for Winton and not a bad idea for Barney Oldfield's publicity agent if I could slip down there and knock the foreign cars for a row of shark's teeth, or whatever the expression in that period was that denoted the same thing.

I talked the matter over with Winton and he liked the idea.

I got all set and went down in the early spring or late winter of 1904. I think it was in February. The date isn't so important. There were to be races of from one to fifty miles. Beach racing was all new to me, and I had a lot to learn. For instance, racing is possible only at low tide. When I used to think of sand, I imagined it was always soft. But those who frequent the Florida and other beaches know that as the tide goes out it packs the beach so hard that it makes a perfect course, even for heavy cars. The only limit to a car's speed is its power.

### The Reason for My Cigar

W. K. Vanderbilt made the mile time trial in thirty-nine seconds with his ninety horse-power Mercedes. This figures about 92.31 miles an hour and was very fast, as may be known by the fact that it was posted as a world's record. In a time trial the contestants go out one at a time, so they have the whole course to themselves.

I decided to enter the mile championship and I was to have plenty of real live competition. H. L. Bowden and Sam S. Stevens both drove sixty horse-power Mercedes racers. W. K. Vanderbilt had his Mercedes; W. Gould Brokaw, a Renault; and Mr. Shanley, a Demanville. Frank LaRoche drove a Darracq. There I was with the Winton Bullet, the only American entrant against a field of six of the fastest foreign cars in the world. That didn't worry me so much. I was still young.

The race was run in heats. Vanderbilt took the first heat in 48⅘ seconds. The two others in his heat, Bowden and Shanley, finished in that order. With Stevens, Brokaw and myself in the second heat, I slipped across the tape first in forty-three seconds. Stevens came next and Brokaw was third.

The final heat was made up of Vanderbilt, Stevens and myself. Stevens got into this heat because of his fast time in his own heat, even though he finished only second.

As I had won the previous heat in the fastest time, I had the pole in the final heat. Stevens got anxious and shot down to the starting tape ahead of me. The start was not allowed and we went back and tried it again. On the next trial I was a little slow in getting under way, but managed to gather enough speed to come down to the starting line on even terms with Stevens and Vanderbilt, and traveling at greater speed than they because of my delayed start, I stepped right out in front and stayed there. My time was not so fast in this heat as it was in the previous one, when I made a world's record of forty-three seconds.

I started in a heat of the five-mile championship, but before I finished I broke my crank shaft. I was traveling at a fast clip, however, and managed to coast across the finish line a winner of the heat. When I did not line up for the final heat there was considerable comment, no one believing that I had broken my crank shaft. But the technical committee examined my car that night and afterward posted a notice on the bulletin at the Ormond Hotel saying that my crank shaft really was broken.

That broken shaft put me out of all further competition, and I hated it, too, for I was pretty sure that I could have taken at least another event.

Vanderbilt won the fifty-mile championship in 40.49⅘; the ten-mile American championship and the ten-mile gentlemen's invitational.

Joe Tracey, one of the old-line American race drivers, was down at the beach with an eighty horse-power Peerless. I was much impressed with the car and decided that one day I would drive one.

I almost forgot to tell that as a reward for winning the world's straightaway championship I received a sterling silver stein, which I understood cost the donor $100. At that particular time I wished I had been a millionaire so that prizes would mean nothing in my young life.

Someone asked me the other day how I came to adopt the mannerism of carrying a cigar constantly in the southwest corner of my mouth. That cigar was always a great advertisement for me; but that wasn't the real reason I carried it there—at least it wasn't the primary reason. Of course, when I found that the newspapers began to take it up and comment on it, explaining all about it, I did all I could to make it more prominent by being sure that whenever I appeared in public there the cigar was also.

But I'll let the readers in on the real reason. It is so simple that you'll know it is the real one. Early in the racing business I found that I had a tendency to set my teeth firmly during the excitement of making fast miles, so that when I tried to relax at night my jaws felt as though they had been in a clamp all day. My teeth were as sore as they would have been with a bad toothache. Another thing: with open teeth set like that, the least little jar is apt to loosen them. But with a soft object between them the jar was much lessened. If I happened to hit the fence or clip a hub cap of the driver next to me, instead of my teeth taking an awful jolt the shock was absorbed by the cigar. This isn't hard to understand. The boxers do the same thing with the rubber buffer in the mouth. It saves them setting their teeth so hard in training and it also saves them if they get a nasty clip from the glove of a sparring partner.

### A Sport for Professionals

In the late spring of 1904 Alexander Winton and I had a disagreement. I had been growing pretty cocky with my success. While I was in the employ of the Winton Company, in reality I had been doing pretty much as I pleased. I had been conducting my racing in the way that would make me the most money. There wasn't a driver in America doing as well as I was. But Mr. Winton, gentleman that he was, kept his contract with me and paid me for a full year. Then, in order to soften the blow to my pride, so far as it related to published reports, he gave out the word that he had concluded that professional racing should be discontinued and amateur racing substituted for it, as he believed the latter to be for the best interests of the factory. He felt sure that the best interests of the automobile industry as a whole would be served if the driving were kept in the hands of amateurs.

Now I for one knew that if he really meant what he said he was wrong, for the automobile racing business had come to the point where it was being placed on a professional basis. Maybe I was wrong in assuming this, from the standpoint of preserving the pure atmosphere of racing as a sport. I don't know. But I believe that I had only advanced the time when it would become wholly professional; I had not in reality started it on a path that it would not have had to follow sooner or later, even had I not been in the game. Had I not been one of the first to demand money instead of cups, someone else would have come along and done so.

In looking ahead I had come to see also that automobile racing, to be successful,

Continued on Page 61

(Continued from Page 56)

must be conducted on tracks especially built for it. Even the dirt tracks, normally used for horse racing only, must be put in better shape if they were to be used for automobile racing. The ordinary mile and half-mile dirt tracks were well enough at first, but so fast had automobile speed increased that the tracks had not kept pace. However, it was to be some time before tracks built especially for the automobile were to be built, and the first of these was built in Los Angeles, the Playa del Rey wooden saucer.

The Peerless company was looking for someone to exploit its product, so I did not wait for a job. I made arrangements with the Peerless maker on much the same basis as my contract with Winton. I was to have a fairly lightweight car that would develop around 100 horse power. Until the car could be built, I was to be tendered the old ex-Gordon Bennett Cup racer, Green Dragon. It had to be remodeled for track work. The motor position was exceptionally low, the flywheel nearing the ground to only three inches. The Dragon was painted green, with a black fore part, so that it looked in truth like a dragon, with its low-lying body and torpedo-like hood.

### My Green Leather Suit

The Dragon was even more of a racing car in appearance than was the Winton Bullet. That is, it more nearly approached present-day car lines. It had a small radiator in front of the hood, but outside of the hood. The hood, low and rakish, covered a four-cylinder motor. My steering wheel had more of a tilt to it than did that of the old Bullet, and my seat position was thus much lower. I used wooden-spoke wheels covered with disks of tin. I still sat high enough in the air to cause the wind to sweep over the hood and hit me down as low as halfway between my shoulders and my ears.

Desiring to set myself apart, I decided to call my driving in a suit of green leather to match the color of my car. I got a good many laughs and comments from spectators, who said I was trying to bring the idioms of the running-horse track to the automobile business. They were doing just what I wanted them to do—notice me. Wherever anyone saw a green car and a green-suited driver they didn't have any doubt as to what outfit it was. It had to be Barney Oldfield and his Peerless Green Dragon.

Shortly after I became associated with the Peerless I received my first of a long line of suspensions from the American Automobile Association. That meant I could not race on any of the sanctioned tracks until I was reinstated. Some of my friends and well-wishers came to me with the tale that the reason I was suspended was because some of the millionaire sports-men were jealous of me as a professional racer and one who was ruining their sport. I did not take a great deal of stock in that, and I couldn't hold it against them, even if the millionaires did not like the commercialization of their sport. Without them to give it its early impetus, there might not have been a racing game for me to profit by. Others told me that I had been putting on too many airs and it was time I was disciplined.

The real reason I was suspended from the A. A. A. was because, along with various other drivers, I had flouted the rigid rules of the Three-A by participating in unsanctioned meets, or by promising two promoters at widely varying points that I would race for them on the same day. I recall once I made the mistake of promising to race both at Pittsburgh and at Chicago. As a matter of fact, I expected to decide the matter by taking the better offer. I raced at Pittsburgh, and Chicago had me suspended and fined $100.

On being reinstated I took my Green Dragon to Detroit, where I raced Earl Kiser and Charlie Gorndt, both of whom were driving Wintons. Earl was the Toledo agent for the Winton at that time and was becoming a thorn in my side so far as speed was concerned. I managed to win four out of the five events from these two and that made me feel pretty good.

In those days, when tracks were not properly prepared, heavy dust was one of our greatest troubles on the dirt tracks. I had one of the worst accidents of my career at St. Louis on August 28, 1904. The race was the Louisiana Purchase Trophy, being part of a special world's fair program. There were five or six of us entered, two of whom, I remember, were Webb Jay in a steamer and Alonzo Webb in a Pope-Toledo. We lined up and started down to the tape for a flying start. Although the starter didn't give us the signal, Webb and I thought he did. I shot ahead and tore into the first turn, Webb following me. On the back stretch he gave his big Pope-Toledo everything he had and passed me, going into the second turn ahead of me. I wasn't going to be left behind, so I opened up and was closing up on him. But the dust thrown by his machine was so heavy that I could not tell where I was going. I tried to make the turn by instinct. It didn't work. There was a terrific crash, the old Dragon shot through the fence, tearing the boards in splinters for a distance of 100 feet. Then I went right into the crowd at that point. Two men were killed and several were injured. My car hit a tree and I kept right on going, fetching up finally, feeling pretty much as though I had been run through a stone crusher. But I got up and walked back to the clubhouse, where it was found that I had three broken ribs and a few other items not so bad, but bad enough to keep me out of racing for some time. My crash through and smash into a tree made scrap iron out of my Dragon. It was in such shape that it could not be repaired.

By the time I was ready to race again, Louis Mooers, engineer of the Peerless company, had finished the second Green Dragon for me. This car looked much like the old one, except that the radiator was built into the hood in the conventional manner. To make the car look racier, Mooers had designed it so that the radiator came to a point in front. The car, being underslung, had a low center of gravity. The engine, gasoline tank and all were in front of me. My seat was directly over the rear axle. I liked the layout of the car much better than the old Winton Bullet, and better even than the first Dragon.

### Dewey Backs an American

On October eighth the Vanderbilt Cup race had been run, with Heath, an American, driving a foreign Panhard, the winner. Considerable discussion had been aroused as to the relative merits of the American-made and the foreign cars. I felt the Dragon had a chance to defeat any car in the world. That thought led me to one of the finest Waterloos I ever attended in all my years of racing.

The race meet was held at the Brighton Beach track, outside of New York City. It was a heat affair. I defeated Wridgeway in our trial heat and earned the right to drive in the final heat. Bernin, the Frenchman, in a Renault owned by W. Gould Brokaw, won his heat; and Paul Sartori, the Italian, in a Fiat owned by Alfred Vanderbilt won his heat by default.

We lined up for the final heat of five miles. I had the pole position, Bernin the second place and Sartori was on the outside. I shot into the lead at the get-away, with Sartori second and Bernin third. Then Bernin passed Sartori, then he passed me and kept right on going. I finished a poor third. I came in for a lot of panning in the press. A popular hero was supposed to win all the time, I guess.

On October twenty-ninth I managed to get back to the pinnacle from which I had fallen. There was a big return meet at the Empire City track. That track was in a great deal better shape than the Brighton course. I was a little peeved also. The day was ideal for racing. We had a big crowd, in spite of the counter attraction of a football game.

Sartori, with Vanderbilt's ninety horse power Fiat, won his heat from Leon Thery, European road champion, who was driving an eighty horse Richardson-Brasier. In the second heat Bernin, driving Brokaw's Renault, lined up with me in my sixty horse Green Dragon No. 2. Bernin had the pole. He was a heavy favorite. But I managed to beat him badly, though he made me travel fast enough to break the world's standing-start records from one to ten miles to do it.

When the final heat was called Alfred Vanderbilt went around betting on Sartori. I think this got Admiral George Dewey, who was quite a race fan, somewhat riled. He said an American driver and an American car were good enough for him, so he put his wagers on me. It was a big contrast in machines, Sartori's big black Fiat, cumbersome looking, but fast, and my frail-looking Dragon. I stepped right out and beat Sartori badly, doing the ten miles in nine minutes and twelve seconds, a world's record with a standing start.

### Records for 1904

The West Coast called me and I went, spending the waning weeks of 1904 driving the various tracks, of which there were several good ones. At Fresno I went fifty miles in forty-eight minutes forty seconds; I put the mile record at fifty-three seconds in my last exhibition at Los Angeles.

I had stopped at the Overland track in Denver on the way out and broke a number of records there, so that when I shipped the Dragon back to Cleveland for overhauling during the winter I had annexed every record from one to fifty miles during my racing career. In the three years I had been driving I had broken the mile mark on six occasions—four times with the 999 and once each with the Winton Bullet and the Green Dragon.

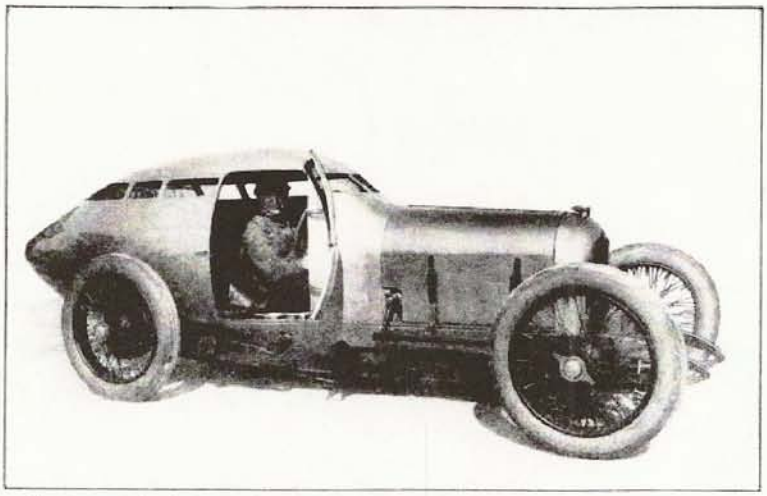
Later I was to circle a mile dirt track in forty-three seconds. But that time had not arrived. The following records made in 1904 with my Green Dragon may be of interest as showing the top speed at that time:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 mile | 51[illegible] |
| 5 miles | 4 [illegible] |
| 10 miles | 9:12 |
| 15 miles | 14:05 |
| 20 miles | 18:47[illegible] |
| 25 miles | 23:[illegible] |
| 30 miles | 28:[illegible] |
| 35 miles | 33:[illegible] |
| 40 miles | 38:[illegible] |
| 45 miles | 43:29 |
| 50 miles | 48:[illegible] |

Though I had started racing when there were very few in it and done much to make the game, so to speak, I was not to have the field to myself. There had even thus early arisen a crop of young drivers who were destined to make life miserable for me. Four of these were Earl Kiser, in a Winton; Webb Jay, White steamer; Herb Lytle, Pope-Toledo; Charlie Burman, Peerless Blue Streak. As the years rolled on, these ranks were added to. Bob Burman, wild Bob Burman, who was to startle the world, had not been heard of. Louis Chevrolet, who had come to this country in 1901 and allied himself with the Fiat Import Company, was little known. But later on Louis was to take my measure perhaps oftener than anyone else.

More and more factories were getting into racing. At this point the peak of the rich men's private ownership of racing cars had about been reached. Now were beginning to appear the young mechanics from factories, factory salesmen and dealers, who were as willing to drive for glory as for gold. Personally, I had lost my interest in cups and other trophies. I had had enough of them. I had settled down to make auto racing a business, pure and simple, just as a banker makes banking his business.

Editor's Note—This is the first of two articles by Mr. Oldfield. The next will appear in an early issue.



The Famous Golden Submarine, One of the Fastest Racing Cars Ever Driven by Oldfield on a Dirt Path

beach at more than 131 miles an hour! Thus do opinions change.

With the 1905 racing season over, I went up to New York to circulate and spend some of my hard-earned cash in pleasure. Tom Cooper, my old racing buddy, came along, and within a week I had cooked up a big idea for taking racing into vaudeville. We had the act all ready to spring, when I was induced to change my booking from vaudeville to the legitimate. Elsie Janis was starring in The Vanderbilt Cup and going big. The suggestion was made that we could put some atmosphere into her show by using my vaudeville act. Tom and I had to perform matinees and nightly as race drivers. The male star was the hero of the story.

We took the Peerless Blue Streak and the Green Dragon, put them on a treadmill and anchored them there so they could not get loose and fly out into the audience. At the proper moment, when the fearless mechanic was to do his stuff—the mechanic being the hero—we opened up our motors and let 'em roar. I'll say this: that as noise makers our cars didn't have any equal. I got so excited a couple of times that I started to take a turn at 100 miles an hour, but stopped just in time. The treadmill was moved back and forth to give the impression of the two drivers jockeying along the road. To give a little more racing atmosphere to the performance, I conceived the brilliant idea of letting some fuller's earth drop on the treadmill. This made such a vivid dusty-road effect that the audience had to cough for a week before it got the dust out of its lungs. The clothes cleaners did a land-office business, also, getting the dust out of the theatergoers' clothes while the show was in town.

### The Ex-Champions at Hartford

AFTER throwing fuller's earth for ten weeks in New York, we hit the road. We played Hartford, Connecticut, at the time Jim Corbett was there in Cashel Byron's Profession. Jimmy Britt, ex-lightweight champion, was trailing along with me at the time. We were booked for the Parsons Theater. The newspapers one night came out with nice big headlines saying:

"Hartford was the rallying point last night for a number of ex-champions. James J. Corbett, ex-champion heavyweight, has been here for several days. The new arrivals include James Edward Britt, ex-champion lightweight; Barney Oldfield, ex-champion motorist, and Tom Cooper, ex-champion bicycle rider."

There were a couple of other wise cracks about my being the highest paid Thespian in the world for the number of words spoken, since I didn't utter a sound and was paid $2000 a week. That $2000 was all press-agent bunk. What I really got was $500.

The show business was too slow. I wanted to get back to the racing game. The Peerless company decided to build one or two cars for road racing. I was slated to drive one of these in the 1906 Grand Prize on Long Island. For some reason or other the company changed its mind about entering and I didn't get to drive. Instead, I went on a tour of the South, racing two or three times a week.

My pride got a rather stiff jolt in Atlanta. Nap Lajoie and his Chevelanders were there in March, and so was I. Larry and I were old friends from our Cleveland days and we had a great time in Atlanta. One day Larry brought me over a letter.

"Do you think you are pretty well known in the United States?" he asked before he gave me the letter.

"Well, I think I am," I answered.

"As well known as I am?" he kept on.

"I don't see why not. I'm a bigger fool for risking my neck than you are."

"Well, here's a letter for you."

I took it and read the address: "Barney Oldfield, care of Larry Lajoie, the greatest ball player on earth."

Looking over a small memorandum book the other day, which I used to carry in those days, I ran across some interesting information. Bill Pickens was managing me then, and Bill tried to keep me pretty busy. We had a contract for 60 per cent of the receipts at Macon, Georgia. The receipts were $624.75. My 60 per cent amounted to $374.85. After paying all other expenses, the Macon Auto Club had $82.60 left to put into its treasury. However, that wasn't so bad for me as it sounds. In a big city like Atlanta I often carried away from $2000 to $3000. This was very good pay, considering that the Peerless company met all expense on the cars.

My contract with the Peerless company expired in the summer of 1907; and in order that I might not have to cancel the dates that my manager, Ernie Moross, made for me, I bought the Blue Streak and the Green Dragon from the company. Having long since learned the value of spending money on equipment if the cars were to be in good shape, I had a private car built to carry the two racing automobiles and mechanics. Besides making me independent of local repair-shop conditions, this proved a big advertising stunt for me. I was the only person in the world to have a private repair shop on wheels. I was credited with having a hundred times as much money as I really had. But there were no income-tax officials in those days; and as it was good publicity, I let the newspapers tell me how much money I made without raising a dissenting voice, just as various popular ring champions do today. I knew that all the world loves a successful man, and I was willing to have them make me highly successful if they cared to.

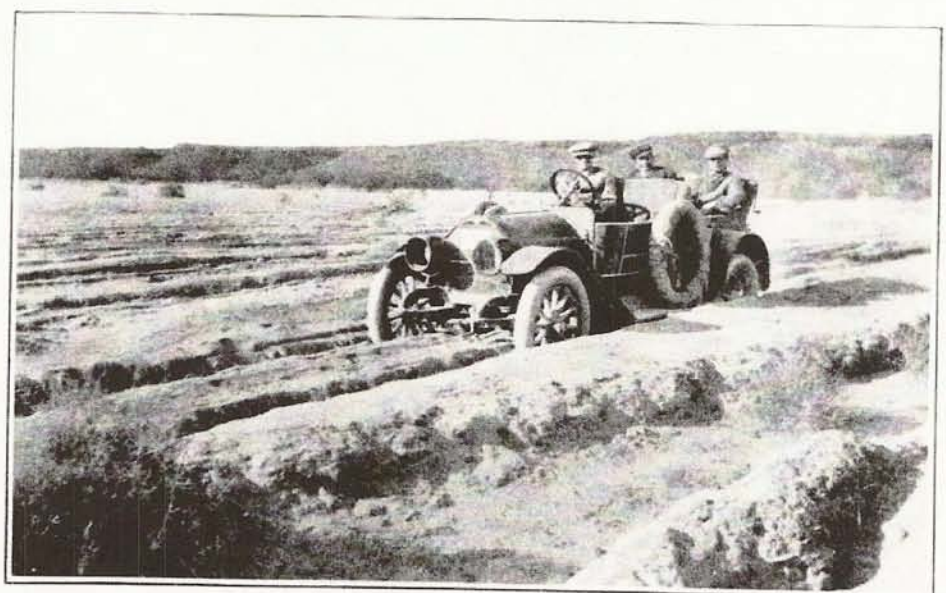
There was one drawback to this. I contracted expensive habits. A popular hero had to be a popular hero, and that meant spending money. I spent lavishly about hotels and, frankly, ran some bills at the bar for myself and friends that would have staggered my millionaire friends in the racing game with me. This spending was just a phase of the racing business, in 1903 to 1909 and beyond, that paralleled the boxer's ideas early in the fighting game. Today the boys who race do not go in for that sort of thing. The public has been educated to believe that they are solid business men, and most of them really are. They don't do much carousing around at night. I am speaking now of the drivers on the big-time circuits.

### Half as Fast But Twice as Risky

THE boys who campaign the big speedways today have a very pleasant job along side of what Herb Lytle, Charlie Burman, Webb Jay, Earl Kiser, Frank Kulick, Louis Chevrolet, Bert Dingley, Caleb Bragg and others used to have. They ship their cars by express, travel on Pullmans themselves, have a corps of mechanics, and their cars are built like railroad watches. In one or two of the pictures with this article I have tried to show the mechanical appearance of the cars of a score of years ago, which is quite different from those of the present. We took more chances then at fifty miles an hour than the boys do today when they travel 126 miles an hour, which they do right along on the board tracks of the country.

Bozeman Bulger, the newspaper writer and humorist, rode out with me in my Red Rover touring car to Coney Island while I was driving the Green Dragon. He asked me if I wouldn't give him a ride in the Dragon. Bozeman said he had always wanted the sensation of riding a mile a minute on a dirt track and he wanted to write a story about it afterward. I had sworn off on taking newspapermen on rides since one day in Detroit when I had one aboard and rounded a turn

(Continued on Page 129)



Out on a Practice Trip for the 1912 Los Angeles to Phoenix Desert Race

# WIDE OPEN ALL THE WAY

Continued from Page 21

and the scribe kept going right straight ahead and over the outside fence.

But I liked Bozeman, and I knew he would write the story up in good style and the publicity wouldn't hurt me any. So I told him to come out to the Empire City track and I would take him around. What I had made up my mind to do was to give Bozeman the ride of his young life. Here is a part of Bozeman's story:

"'There is only one seat on the car and I have to use that,' Barney further told me. 'You'll have to sit there.' He pointed to a little box about six inches square that held part of the batteries.

"The ground rolled out underneath us like a yellow ribbon. I raised my head a minute, ceased looking down and to one side, and looked straight ahead. The wind tore at my eyes, but that was not all. We were going straight into the fence; rather, the fence was rushing toward us. I shut my eyes. I grew weak all over. I waited for the crash which I knew must come. It didn't. Barney yelled something at me. I couldn't hear him, but his lips read 'Hold on!' I couldn't have been holding much tighter if I had been glued.

"At that he reached for his little lever. I thought we had been going fast before, but the car leaped ahead, almost unseating me. Now there was no fence, no grand stand, no nothing—only a great roaring in my ears. My chest was caving in. We reached the turn. We went through it. I thought we were going as fast as we could, but on the homestretch Barney moved his hand again and we jumped forward. The old Dragon snorted and shrieked and groaned. It was in a death struggle to rid itself of its keeper.

"Suddenly the car slowed up, as if by giant hands it had been grasped. Then we coasted into the turn, came to a slow gait on the back stretch, then stopped.

"'How fast did we go that last mile?' I asked.

"'If we had had an official timer on the job, I would have had a new world's record for a mile to my credit, and the rules don't call for carrying an extra passenger, either,' he said, as he got out of his seat, took off his oily goggles and started to wipe them leisurely."

### *The Three Epochs of Racing*

I might say here for Bozeman's benefit that my manager thought this write-up so good that he had hundreds of copies made of it. Every meet we had from then on, my manager managed to convey to some enterprising young reporter the fact that I would give him a ride if he wanted it. If the reporter wanted it I took him around pretty fast. After which the manager handed him Bozeman's story of his own ride. If the reporter was too scared to take a ride, the manager would hand him the Bulger story anyway, and the reporter would use it, simply signing it The Reporter. If he actually took the ride, of course, he signed his own name to Bulger's masterpiece.

As I mentioned before, I had bought the Blue Streak and the Green Dragon in 1907 in order to finish my racing engagements. I paid just $2000 for these two racing cars and a touring car. Today a good racing car costs from $10,000 to $12,500.

In 1908, early in the spring, I sold the two racing cars for $1500, resolved to quit racing and enter business. But the rumor had got abroad in New York that I was broke and I could not make the proper connection. It didn't help me any to know personally that I was in better financial shape than I had ever been in my life. I couldn't make anyone else believe it. There was only one thing for me to do, and I did it. I went back into racing.

Harlan Whipple, president of the American Automobile Association, asked me to drive in the Briarcliff road race. I had clutch trouble and did not finish. This was my first meeting with Ralph De Palma, afterward to become famous on the speed paths of America. Ralph drove an Allan-Kingston in this, his first race.

Automobile racing in America may be divided into three great epochs. The first epoch is that from the first race in Chicago in 1895 to the first Vanderbilt Cup race in 1904. In this epoch there were few American cars in racing—that is, worthwhile racing. Instead, the foreign cars imported by rich men in New York held the stage in large degree. American cars were not considered fast enough. The real start of American racing began with Winton's and Henry Ford's entry. They did not supersede the foreign cars, at least not immediately; but they gave American-car racing a great impetus.

Today the American race driver is supreme in America. It is hard work to get the foreigner to come over. He feels that he hasn't a chance against American-made cars and drivers. To get any of them to come over it is necessary to give them a guaranty.

The second epoch in American racing runs from the 1904 Vanderbilt Cup contest on through to 1911, the year of the first International Sweepstakes 500-mile race at Indianapolis, on a specially built two-and-a-half-mile speedway. This epoch really continues up to 1916. It was in this second epoch that factory participation in racing rose to its peak. The factory racing cars were in large measure only refined stock models. The European invasion had dropped to almost zero by 1911, but it flared up again in 1913, to run for a few years, then to die away again. In this flare-up participation by European cars was limited to the one big race of the year—the International Sweepstakes at Indianapolis.

The third epoch may be said to have begun in 1916, when there began to appear specially built racing cars. That year saw the practical end of American-made stock or near-stock car racing. The third era is still continuing today, when there is not a single racing car built for the great board and brick speedways that can lay claim to a close relationship to any car built for passenger-carrying use, other than that its operation is the same in degree. But in size of motor and design of body the racing car has no bearing on passenger-car construction.

De Palma and I met later in 1908 in a five-mile match race and he won from me decisively. This was at the Readville, Massachusetts, track.

I fell for the foreign cars in 1909. I came into possession of the 120-horse-power Benz with which Victor Hemery had finished second in the 1906 French Grand Prix. The Indianapolis speedway was built in 1909. It was first paved with tar and crushed stone. It was opened with a race meet in August. Much had been made of the course, so that practically every driver of prominence in the country was entered.

I managed to win the kilometer and the mile event, getting besides a cash prize a gold-plated touring car for holding the mile speedway record of America, a mile in forty-three seconds. Walter Christie, with his front-drive racing monster, appeared at this meet also and made some remarkable time, covering a quarter of a mile in 8.38 seconds, or faster than any automobile had ever traveled in America before that time, even for that short distance.

The crowd of 16,000 that witnessed the races was the largest automobile race crowd in America up to that time. Today 140,000 people assemble once a year—May thirtieth—at the same track to see the only 500-mile race held in America.

Louis Chevrolet drove a revamped stock car and broke my ten-mile record of 9.12, which I had made at the Empire City track in 1904. There was a difference in conditions, however, as my time was made on a mile dirt track, while his was made on a speedway two and a half miles around.

### *My Queerest Record*

Bob Burman first came into public notice here. He won a 250-mile race in 4:38:57.4. The last race of the meet was a 300-mile event, but it was stopped at 235 miles. The powerful cars had cut great trenches axle-deep into the soft surface of the track. Billy Bourque and his mechanician, Harry Holcombe, were killed and many others injured. Immediately afterward this track was paved with brick.

I believe it was in 1909 that I took my racer to Lowell, Massachusetts, and made a mile on a straightaway course in thirty-nine seconds flat.

In 1909, so-called stock-car racing had reached its height. It was to run for several years and then fade completely from the picture in 1917, never to return again.

My queerest record was made at Dallas, Texas, on December 9, 1909, with my Hemery Benz. A terrific norther hit the town in the morning. That afternoon I put on my fur coat, covered my face with a woolen hood and put on heavy fur gloves. I put half water and half alcohol in my radiator. The track was frozen in spots, but there was a good turnout of spectators. I was carded to break my own fifty-mile record. I did it, but I had to be lifted out of the car at the finish. My hands were so cramped around the steering wheel that they had to be worked loose. But I reduced my 48.40½ time made at Fresno in 1904 to 47.18.

I liked the Benz and got hold of another in 1910. This was the 200-horse-power Blitzen, or Lightning, Benz, which I got by trading my Hemery Benz and $6000 cash for it. Resolved to see how fast the car was, and determined to make some beach records if possible, I shipped down to Daytona. Here on March sixteenth I managed to break all existing speed records. I covered the kilometer at 132.04 miles an hour, the mile at 131.75 miles an hour, two miles at 128.88 miles an hour.

Kaiser Wilhelm must have heard of my performance in the German-made car, for he sent me this wire:

"I congratulate a daring Yankee on so remarkable a performance in a German car."

(Continued from Page 130)

then. Our route lay over rough dirt roads with plenty of nice sharp turns. The distance between the two points is around 130 miles. It is a lot easier to tell it than it is to drive it, but I made San Diego in two hours and thirty minutes, and I was the first one there. That record still stands. I was somewhat surprised a few months ago to read that a factory driver who makes a specialty of road records had "Beaten Barney Oldfield's Los-Angeles-to-San-Diego record, which had stood for twelve years, the intrepid Blank driving the distance in two hours and forty-five minutes!" My time was inadvertently omitted. It had happened a long time ago, anyhow, and folks wouldn't remember the time. I get a bit of comfort out of the fact that the 2:45 was made on paved roads and that my 2:30 was made on dirt roads—and my record time is fifteen minutes shorter.

### Luck of the Desert

I paid for my speed to San Diego, however. Outside of Yuma, my much-punished drive shaft broke and I started to walk back over the hot sand. I don't know how long I walked. Jack Rice, a youngster, also driving a Simplex, was running right up with some of the old hands until he got to Dome, which he had reached only five minutes behind me. I was then in third place. Near Dome, Rice's car rolled over a bluff and injured his mechanic. Rice got some Mexican railroad workers to put the car back on its wheels, the mechanic was taken to a hospital at Palomas and Rice went on alone.

I'm glad he did. He met me on my nice cool walk over the sand, with the mercury batting its head against the top of the tube. I got into the vacant seat beside him and rode on with him. His steering wheel was all shot to pieces and when we came to my car we stopped and took mine off to replace his, which was almost useless. Thus through the second and third day I rode with him. It was all the luck of the desert. I retrieved myself some by driving some fast races on the track at Phoenix as part of the Arizona State Fair. The winner in that desert race received $3500; second man, $2250; third, $1500; fourth, which was Rice, $500.

Ralph De Palma and I had a squabble in 1914 that made us enemies for years. Ralph was captain of the Mercer factory racing team, and a good captain he was. The other drivers were Eddie Pullen and Spencer Wishart. I was asked by the factory management to come on the team, but De Palma was not consulted in the matter. I accepted and Ralph said if I was taken on he would get off the team. I was not asked to stay off the team because of De Palma's attitude, so De Palma left. I tell this story in order that so many of the rumors concerning our feud may be laid away on the closet shelf.

This happened in the early spring of 1914. I may as well tell the story to its end. De Palma said several uncomplimentary things about me and I wasn't backward with my tongue either. In 1916 Ralph was a few days late with his entry in the Indianapolis 500-mile race. The story reached me that he had tried to get appearance money from the management, saying he would not enter unless he did. The management didn't come through and he decided to enter anyhow. The speedway, in the regular course of business, wrote all the drivers, asking them if they would permit De Palma to enter two days after the entries closed officially on May first. When the letter came to me I simply wrote back, calling attention to the terms of the entry blank which specified that the entries must be in by May first. I knew that De Palma would have done as much for me if the conditions had been reversed, so I took pleasure in making him live up to the entry blank. Though Ralph and I may not be bosom friends today, we are older and wiser. We speak like rational human beings when we meet. Besides, that grudge was a mighty fine thing for the press agents to harp on whenever we appeared on the same race program.

But getting back to the Mercer fuss in the spring of 1914: Ralph never wanted for the wheel of a car and he soon had hooked up with H. J. Schroeder, New Jersey millionaire, whose Mercedes he had driven at Indianapolis in 1912 and with which he won the Elgin race in August, 1912, and the Vanderbilt in October of the same year.

The Vanderbilt Cup was scheduled for Santa Monica on February 26, 1914, not long after I had joined the Mercer team. The distance was 294.035 miles, to be exact, around an 8.4 mile course, practically all of it in or near the town of Santa Monica. De Palma came to the coast with his Mercedes and the reporters began to throw fuel on our feud. It was admitted that my Mercer was somewhat faster than De Palma's Mercedes. That one race is a good example of how a race may be won or lost at the pits.

There were fifteen entries—De Palma, Mercedes; Oldfield, Mercer; Carlson, Mason; Cooper, Stutz; Joerimann, Touraine; Janette, Alco; Anderson, Stutz; Ball, Marmon; Pullen, Mercer; Goode, Apperson; Verbeck, Fiat; Marquis, Sunbeam; Wishart, Mercer; Lewis—the same Lewis who finished a front-drive racer second in the 1925 Indianapolis 500-mile race, 53.58 seconds behind the winner—Mason; Harry Grant, Isotta-Fraschini.

Lewis' Mason was the product of two then obscure engineers in Iowa, the Duesenberg brothers, just beginning to get into the automobile manufacturing business. Later on their motors were to win many great races, but at the time of which I write they were building a few passenger cars and making a few race cars to advertise their passenger-car product. They called their cars Masons, after the man who was financing their car making. These early Masons were the progenitors of the specially built racing cars which in the next few years were to eclipse the factory racing cars. I don't mean the Masons were to do the eclipsing, but they paved the way for the racing cars, built for racing pure and simple, that were to relegate factory stock-car racing to the junk heap of competition.

### Racing Beachey's Airplane

But getting back to the Santa Monica Vanderbilt: Tom Alley, a good mechanician, was riding with De Palma, and George Hill, the best man I ever had at my right, was riding with me. Wishart led the field at the end of the first lap. Anderson, in his Stutz, was second, Pullen third and I fourth. I should have stated that the drivers were sent away at fifteen-second intervals. De Palma started in eleventh place, while I started in sixth. At the twentieth lap of the thirty-five-lap race, De Palma had passed me and was leading me by a minute and eight seconds. I had lost my time by a pit stop in the eighth lap. In the twenty-third lap I had closed up the gap until only thirty seconds separated me from De Palma.

I had figured that Ralph would have to make one stop in the race and that I would not have to make any more, so I had him whipped right then. It was almost necessary to make one stop for gas and oil, if not for a tire change. I passed De Palma in the twenty-fifth lap. At this point, so there had our duel become, that we had left all others a lap behind. In the twenty-seventh lap De Palma was leading me by one second. Then I had some bad luck. I had to stop in the thirty-first lap for a new tire. My stop had cost me seventy seconds.

In the next lap I picked up eleven seconds of my lost time. I knew then that unless De Palma made a stop for fuel or a tire, I was not going to win the race. I knew he was taking a big chance that his forty-gallon gas tank would carry him through and that his tires would stand the grind. But they did. De Palma said afterward that he had put on a new carburetor made for him by Harry Miller and that was why he had got enough gasoline mileage to go all the way. I finished second. Ralph thus got his first revenge. His prize money was $3000 and possession of the Vanderbilt Cup for one year. Second place paid $2000; third, $1500; fourth, $1000.

Eddie Pullen, in a Mercer, had won the Grand Prize, which had been run three days before over the same course, with Ball in a Marmon second and Taylor in an Alco third; so, though I hated to be licked by De Palma, I felt pretty good over the showing of the Mercer team as a whole.

About this time Lincoln Beachey, another good friend of mine, suggested that we do some barnstorming, racing his plane against my car. We spent the summer of 1914 at this highly remunerative entertainment, giving folks the thrill of their lives, for airplanes were not so common then as they are now. Beachey, who was killed when his plane collapsed and he fell into the ocean at San Francisco in 1915 during the World's Fair, was a very merry young man. When I look at the planes of today, made as strong as a Pullman car, then look at the rickety planes Beachey flew, the wonder is that a man had the courage to get into them, let alone loop the loop, fly upside down and nose-dive.

### The 1914 Cactus Derby

To illustrate: Beachey swooped too low in one of our exhibitions. He saw what a fix he had got into. He could come on and kill me and a photographer, who was standing near by. Or he could nose-dive straight into the ground and perhaps kill himself. He nose-dived, missing me and my Fiat Cyclone by a hair, and splintered his plane on the ground. He was badly hurt, but recovered.

The Cactus Derby, the annual November Los Angeles to Phoenix road race, was calling me again and I set my mind on doing considerably better than I had in the year previous. The 1914 race was the sixth annual event. This was easily the premier racing event of the West. The finish of the race was at the State Fair at Phoenix, Arizona. Business all along the line stopped when the road race got under way. Ranchers came from miles around to the night controls or lined the rough roads over which the race was to pass.

The distance of 671 miles between the two points was divided into three days of racing. The night controls were at Needles, California, and Prescott, Arizona. Between these points were numerous checking stations, so that no driver might skip any part of the course. Always doing things on a big scale, the citizens of Los Angeles made up what they called the Howdy Special, a train that was to run through with the racers and be with them at every checking point or night control, where possible.

Ted Rambler, in a Paige, was sent away from Eastlake Park, Los Angeles, first, at 5:25 A.M.; Louis Chevrolet, in a Chevrolet, was second away. I got away in my Stutz fifth. There was a nasty drizzle at the start, and it was mud, rain or snow all the way into Phoenix. The weather cleared some the last day, but it had rained so hard that the roads were a mess. Cliff Durant, millionaire sportsman, drove another Chevrolet.

Needles, 301 miles away, was our first day's goal. To reach it we had five concrete pavements to start, then a climb up through Cajon Pass, then a drop onto the desert again and a road that was little more than two tracks over the sage and adobe. I had George Hill as my mechanician. We made Needles in eight hours and forty-five minutes. Cliff Durant, in his little Chevrolet, was the second man in, six minutes behind us. That was a wonderful performance for his little car. We rested there that night, with our cars shut up in a corral, at control, so that we could do no work on them. Any work to be done must be done while the race was in progress.

The next leg of the race, Prescott, 238 miles, we made in eight hours, eighteen

(Continued on Page 137)

Trust Bill not to forget Germany!

Things began looking up for me in the racing line directly after my fast miles in the Benz. I got an invitation to race at the Playa del Rey motordrome, a one-mile board saucer track at Los Angeles. With the invitation came a $4000 bonus for signing up. You can bet I signed. To show my appreciation, I managed to circle the course in 36½ seconds, which was a speedway record.

There was a race meet at the Minnesota State Fair grounds in 1910 that stands out in my mind, as I look backward. Not because I made some fast time, not because Wild Bob Burman and Louis Chevrolet and a host of other drivers were there, but because of a young unknown driver who came across my path for the first time. He drove a Firestone-Columbus racer. He didn't win a race; the best he could do was finish second to Wild Bob and his Buick Bug. Later on this quiet young man came to be one of the most feared drivers on the speed courses of America, and in 1915 he missed the American Automobile Drivers' Championship by a hair-breadth, finishing second to Dario Resta. But even there was not where his greatest fame was to lie.

When America got into the World War he sought to enlist a flying squadron of American racing drivers for the air service. The necessary funds were lacking and the idea went flat. Nothing daunted, he signed up for the infantry to act as chauffeur to General Pershing. Driving a general's car proved a trifle tame, but it was a path to the flying service. He finally achieved his ambition, and before he had been long in the service he developed a fondness for German sausages for breakfast. To satisfy his appetite he used to go out and shoot them down before he ate the morning meal. He became death to hoche planes as well as their sausages. He retired from the air service at the end of the war with the rank of commander of the Ninety-fourth Air Squadron and a record of twenty-six German aircraft to his credit. His was that world-famous Hat-in-the-Ring Squadron. Capt. Edward V. Rickenbacker. Eddie to the racing boys got his baptism of courage wheeling sporting racers around the speedways of America. Without the speedways, it is a safe guess that Eddie would never have been America's ace of aces.

*Ted Sloan, Internationally Famous Jockey From Kokomo, Ind., Telling Barney Oldfield How to Do it at the Horse Track at Tia Juana, April, 1925*

### *Outlaw Race Meets*

The year 1910 was a stormy one in my racing career. Jim Jeffries and I had always been the best of friends. I am not going to bring up the old story that Jim was drugged when he fought Jack Johnson for the heavyweight championship of the world at Reno in 1910. But I am going to bring up what happened to me as the result of that defeat.

Johnson had bought a fast Renault car in France and announced that he was just as invincible on the track as he was in the roped ring. He sent me a challenge to race him at any distance. I never should have accepted the challenge. But I did, and we met at the Sheepshead Bay track on October 25, 1910, in a series of three five-mile match races. I beat him easily, as I knew I could. We ran only two heats of the three.

I hadn't given the Three-A angle of the race much consideration. When I was told that I would be suspended by the Three-A if I went ahead with the race, it was too late to back out. My suspension for racing Johnson was until July 1, 1912—plenty of time for me to meditate. Barred from all sanctioned tracks, I still did not put my cars away in moth balls. My friends on the West Coast rallied around me in my misery. Chief of these friends were Frank Chance, manager of the Chicago Cubs and later of the Los Angeles baseball club, Jim Jeffries and a host of others. Chance went so far as to be a starter of the outlaw race meets at Ascot Park, in which I participated. I think he did this simply to show he was my friend. When I asked Eddie Maier, another friend, to officiate at Ascot he said he certainly would. This in spite of the fact that he had officiated at many A. A. A. races on the Coast.

The publicity I got as the outlaw racing king made me a good drawing card, but I can't say now that I should have been proud of it. While I was an outlaw I reduced Ralph De Palma's one-mile track record from 50⅘ seconds to 49⅘ seconds. Jim Jeffries rode as my mechanician during this record mile, and he did a good job, too.

The American Automobile Association took the outlaw ban off my cars before it took it off me. Ernie Moross, then Bob Burman's manager, offered to buy my cars for his protégé and I sold him the Blitzen Benz for $13,500. Other cars in my possession at that time were a Darracq, the Prince Henry Benz and the Knox. Burman took all these off my hands. I felt kindlier toward the A. A. A. for lifting the ban on the cars. There was a wild story circulated at the time that the A. A. A. had bought the cars for $50,000 to get me to quit my racing activities. This was bunk.

Putting all my racing behind me, I joined the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company as a salesman. For years I had been investing in Firestone stock, and not putting all my money over the various saloon bars of the country, as some people had intimated. I had met Harvey S. Firestone. We became friends and that friendship has continued to this day.

Burman took my Blitzen Benz down to the Florida beaches a month after I had sold him the cars, and on April 23, 1911, he covered the course faster than I did. His car sped down the beach over a measured course at the rate of 141.73 miles an hour. I wasn't sorry to see Bob do it. He beat my record, but I had been paving the way for automobile racers for eight years. Whatever I did, they all seemed to flock to that particular stunt in an endeavor to do likewise. Bob was a fine fellow. His first race was in 1905 or 1906 and ten years later he was killed at Corona. Wild Bob Burman! That's what they called him. But he wasn't wild—he was like all the winners; he had to drive hard and without too much caution to win races.

I did not touch a hand to a race car again until in the spring of 1912. During the time of my suspension Burman and Ralph De Palma managed to eclipse practically all the records on mile and half-mile dirt tracks I had made. Bob broke them with the Benz he had bought of me and De Palma's success came with a Fiat Cyclone.

The 500-mile races were inaugurated at the Indianapolis motor speedway in May, 1911, and they have continued an annual event to this day. Racing is safer on the Indianapolis track than on any other in the world, to my notion. There is a three-foot cement safety wall around the inside and outside of the corners, and a heavy timber hub rail along the rest of the course. The great danger on a course of this kind is that a car will have mechanical trouble or hit another car, careen off the course, hit the soft earth of the infield or outfield and turn over. This is not possible now on the 500-mile course. The cars in trouble may hit the rail or the cement wall and slide along until they come to a stop. The brick surface of the track, though far from smooth, is smooth enough to permit the cars to slide instead of to turn over.

My suspension was lifted on April 30, 1912, by the A. A. A., but I still was on the black books of the Indianapolis motor speedway, so I did not compete there that year. I went to the West Coast for the May 4, 1912, fourth annual Santa Monica road race.

Walter Christie, maker of the famous Christie front drive, had decided that his racing car was too dangerous to drive longer. He had stored it in a barn on Long Island. Always ready to try something new, I bought the car from Christie for $750, resolved to ride back to fame on this man killer, as it was called. I also bought the Prince Henry Benz, the third Benz I had owned; leased a Cino, and, with Lou Heinemann and Wild Bill Fritz, started on a barnstorming tour of the Northwest.

Joe Dawson, one of the best and most fearless drivers that ever held a wheel, won the Indianapolis 500-mile race in May, 1912, at the wheel of a National, Joe having switched over to that car when the Marmon quit racing. Tetzlaff, in a Fiat, was second; Hughie Hughes, Mercer, third.

I went to Milwaukee on October 2, 1912, to be a spectator at the eighth Vanderbilt Cup race and the fourth Grand Prize on October fifth. With Bruce-Brown killed in practice, I was offered his Fiat, owned by E. J. Hewlett, to drive in the Grand Prize. The car was new to me, but I decided to take it on. I entered the Grand Prize without even driving a practice lap over the dangerous road course, and finished fourth. De Palma, in a Mercedes, won the Vanderbilt Cup. Caleb Bragg, young millionaire driver, won the Grand Prize. De Palma was seriously hurt when he ran into Bragg's Fiat in an endeavor to beat Bragg out for first place. De Palma was laid up for months.

The Indianapolis motor speedway wouldn't lift the bars for me in the 1913 500-mile race, so I had to watch it from the sidelines. It was in that year that the speedway management decided that European entries would be a good thing for American racing, so England, Belgium and France were represented.

Jules Goux, brilliant French driver, finished first in a Peugeot. Spencer Wishart was second in a Mercer. Charley Merz, Stutz, was third. Albert Guyot, driving an English Sunbeam, was fourth; Pilette, in the seat of a Mercedes-Knight, fifth.

I had done a lot of things, but had never been in the movies. Mack Sennett stopped me on the street in Los Angeles one day in 1913 while I was giving exhibitions on the West Coast.

"Barney," he said, "why don't you go in the movies?"

"Nobody ever asked me," I replied.

"Well, you're asked now," Mack went on. "I've got a big idea." And he told it to me. So I went into the movies for a few reels.

The high-sounding title of the film was Barney Oldfield's Race for Life. Mabel Normand was the heroine and Ford Sterling was the villain. Mack and I shared the hero rôles. If I remember the story right, Ford had my sweetheart tied or chained to a railroad track. I was miles and miles away when I got the idea that all was not exactly right with Mabel. I jumped into my trusty automobile with Mack and raced to where she was chained, for didn't I know the Los Angeles Express was due at the spot in fifteen minutes? And wasn't I at least fifteen miles away—according to the film? You know what I did; I raced for little Mabel's life. I arrived at the spot after a lot of footage had been expended showing that I was a wonderful driver. Jumping from my car, I worked desperately to file the chains that held Mabel. Just as I got her free and dragged her limp form off the rails, of course, the Express thundered by.

### *Tire Trouble*

There was no Vanderbilt Cup or Grand Prize run in 1913. But one of the greatest road-racing battles I ever had came on August ninth of that year. It was in the Santa Monica road event. There was a young fellow then by the name of Earl Cooper driving a Stutz. He was comparatively new to the game. I was driving a Mercer.

The Santa Monica course was almost entirely over macadam roadways. It was instituted to boost the town. The cars were sent away at ten-second intervals. The distance was 445.258 miles. I was starting on the last lap of the race. I had been driving hard all the way, running neck and neck with Cooper. As I rounded the turn of the 8.4-mile course into the home stretch, I saw Cooper slowing up to go into the pits with a flat tire. I rushed past the pits, resolved to make up the lap he had on me. I shot down toward Dead Man's Curve with my mind made up to win the race or die trying. I went through the curve at the Soldiers' Home on two wheels. At the Palisades I paid for my wild driving through the corners. One of my rear tires let go, and there I was, miles from my pit. George Hill tumbled out of the car and we changed the tire. If I had ever had a chance to beat Cooper, it went blooey right there. He won by more than five minutes.

In the Los Angeles to Phoenix desert road race in November of that year I entered a new ninety-horse Simplex, which I was driving.

This road race across the desert was the classic of the West Coast. It demanded car stamina, driving skill and a never-say-die spirit on the part of the driver. My car was capable of 100 miles an hour on smooth stretches. To make a long story short, I started like a house afire and finished like a truck.

Before we got away from Los Angeles, my employer came around to me.

"I've got a big wager that you'll beat the field into San Diego," he said. "That is more important to me than winning the race."

"If that is what you want," I told him, "I can give it to you if the old bus will stay in one piece. But I won't be responsible for how much farther than San Diego she will last. There are some fast wagons and some tough ones in this race, and I'll have to kick her all the way if I get into San Diego first."

"If you get there first, I don't particularly care what happens beyond. See what you can do."

Well, I did see what I could do. I might state here that practically none of the road from Los Angeles to San Diego was paved

(Continued on Page 134)

(Continued from Page 134)

minutes. Our total time of seventeen hours three minutes was far ahead of the second man, Olin Davis, the 1913 winner, who was driving a Simplex. His time was 17:52. Getting away from Prescott the next morning, we finished at the Phœnix Fair Grounds in five hours fifty-six minutes. Louis Nikrent, in a Paige, was second, 36 minutes behind us. That is the unvarnished tale of the roughest race that ever took place over the Los Angeles-Phœnix course. But dipping between the lines, the story is filled with incident.

There was Cliff Durant in his tiny Chevrolet roadster, and Louis Chevrolet, his team mate. Durant had kept right on my tail between Los Angeles and Needles. The going was rough and slippery, yet he twisted his little car within six minutes of my big Stutz. Away from Needles like a flash the next morning, Cliff missed the planking on the railroad bridge at Topock, sixteen miles out. The pounding of the car on the ties tore his tires to pieces and damaged his wheels. But he didn't quit.

Meanwhile Louis Chevrolet, who had been over the course only once, was forging ahead in a companion car to Durant's. At Seligman an excited helper poured ten gallons of water into Louis' gasoline tank. Louis discovered the mistake when he tried to start. To get rid of the water it was necessary to take his carburetor apart. He was in the midst of this operation when Durant hove in sight, fairly dragging along on his crippled wheel. Louis did some quick thinking. Durant's car was in good shape except for one rear wheel. Louis jerked one of his own rear wheels off, put it on Durant's car, ordered Durant's mechanician out of Durant's car, jumped in himself and together Durant and Chevrolet flew on. Chevrolet's car was left as it stood alongside the road. Later on that day a bad skid shot them into a big stone and tore the hub from Durant's car. They were in third place when the accident happened. The broken hub was plenty of reason why they should quit. Instead, they took a Stillson wrench and fastened it to the axle by cutting notches in the wheel and tying the wrench on with a rope. They drove the last thirty-two miles with this emergency hub, finishing fourth. Their car had the smallest engine of any in the race, even smaller than the Ford.

### Steering With Fence Rails

Bill Bramblett, driving a Cadillac, who finished fifth, had more than one thrilling experience. His car dived off a twelve-foot embankment on the last day's run just outside of Prescott. Though it rolled over, it stopped on four wheels. Bill's steering gear was damaged in the accident so that he could no longer steer his car in a straight line; instead, it wabbled all over the road. When within twenty miles of the finish he got stuck in some quicksand and had to be pulled out by a team of horses. Out of the sand, he drove his car recklessly to make up the time he had lost. He skidded near Glendale and broke his steering gear hopelessly, so that he had no control at all through his steering wheel.

Even this didn't stop Bill. He was going to get to Phœnix. He and his mechanician, Mason, ran to a near-by fence, tore two posts off and fastened them to the front axle on the inside of each front wheel. They started the engine and got under way, guiding their car much as a small boy guides a hoop. To keep the car in a straight line, they held their fence posts so that the front wheels could not veer in either direction. When they wished to turn, they forced the wheel in the direction desired by main force. They ground their tires to pieces—but they finished the race in fifth place!

On the first day out, George Hill, my riding mechanician, was slammed against the side of the car so hard in a nasty skid that he injured his arm so that he could work with only one hand afterward. On our last day the mud and water began to get into our carburetor. It had been all over us all the way from Los Angeles. Fording a torrent in a wash on the last day, we got stuck in the middle of it. Imagine my feelings, if you can, when both Nikrent, then in second place, and Bill Bramblett splashed through the wash where I was stalled. They waved as they went on.

After considerable work we finally got out. Then our car refused to run. Some spectators helped us get it up to the top of a grade and then push it down, letting it crank itself as we went. After repeating this operation fifteen or twenty times, the old girl coughed a couple of times, then began to hit once in a while. Once in a while was not enough for us, but it would do in a pinch. She bucked all the way into Phœnix and Hill turned to me every time she threatened to die and squawked "De Palma!" the reference being to the 1912 race at Indianapolis, when De Palma, with a lead of twenty miles over the nearest man, had engine trouble and lost the race with less than two miles to go.

### A Medal That Was Earned

The last ten miles seemed like a hundred to both of us. The mud had so splashed the car that you could hardly tell it was a car. The dirt had got into the oil lines, the gas lines, the steering and everything else. No mother could have recognized her son when he first got into Phœnix. It was not until racing hoods were peeled off with their coating of mud that drivers were recognizable.

The cigar which I carried in the southwest corner of my mouth had long since become a ball of mud, but I made up my mind I wouldn't spit it out if I had to eat all the dirt along the road. I had no more arrived, though, than someone came running up and offered me a box of cigars for my old one. I took the box.

Though I was not the first driver into Phœnix, my elapsed time was such that I had finished in twenty-two hours and fifty-nine minutes for the 671 miles, as against twenty-three hours and thirty-five minutes of Nikrent. That night at the Adams Hotel, Gen. George Purdy Bullard, attorney-general of Arizona, presented me with a diamond medal emblematical of the Master Driver of the World. At that time I was sure I had earned it; in fact, any one of the seven drivers that finished of the twenty that started deserved a medal like that.

Two weeks after the Cactus Derby I took the wheel of a Maxwell in the Corona road race two days before that event was to start. The race was to be of 109 laps around a specially prepared course of 2.76895 miles. The complete distance was 301 miles. Eddie Pullen, in a Mercer, finished first at 86.5 miles an hour. I was second at 85.5 miles an hour. I was almost as much of a hero as Eddie, however, because of my previous reputation on the Coast and because I made a world's record in driving the 301 miles without a stop, and that in a car I had never seen until two days before the race.

I finished sixth in a DeLage at the 1916 Indianapolis 500-mile race on May thirtieth. Dario Resta won the event. During the practice period before the race I had my old front-drive Christie at the track. Always convinced that the front drive was the logical racing design, I decided to see just how fast I could put the car through its paces. The Indianapolis track record then was a lap at the rate of 99.7 miles an hour, made in 1914 by Georges Boillot, the Frenchman, in a Peugeot. My friends tried to get me out of the notion, for they knew, and I knew, that the car was about ready to fall apart. But my knockers never accused me of lacking nerve. I trundled the Christie out, warmed her up for a lap and let her fly. I thought when I hit that first corner that I'd never be able to get through it, but I did. I was sure my time had come at the second corner of the south turn, but I made that too. I knew I was clipping it off too fast to make the third corner, but I put that one behind me and did the same for the last corner. My lap time was 1:27.7, against Boillot's 1:30.13. My average was 102.623 miles an hour.

Later on that summer I took the car to the two-mile speedway at Chicago, resolved to go 120 miles an hour. I got ready for the trial and thought I had the record cinched when I felt the unmistakable tremors that told me the old cylinders were freezing up. All I could do was to cut off the gas and coast in. Instead of the mark of one minute for the two miles, I had to be satisfied with one minute two seconds. I was disgusted. I sold the car to a couple of boys who wanted her. I got $500 and they agreed to get it out of my sight in thirty minutes, which was one of the stipulations of the deal. That was the last time I ever saw the car.

There was a motor builder in my home town, Los Angeles, who was highly touted. So in the spring of 1916 I had gone to him and discussed the building of a motor with several new ideas. Harry Miller had a small machine shop, where he built motors with the exactitude of a watchmaker. He had ridden as a mechanic in the 1906 Vanderbilt Cup and other races, and had been in close contact with racing since that time. He knew me and I knew him. We decided together on an innovation in the racing world.

Instead of having the driver sit out in the open, where he had a good chance to get his neck broken in case of a turnover, we decided to have the driver sit inside the car. We designed the body with a rounded top so that the car looked much like an egg with a hood on one end of it. The motor was a four-cylinder engine that would develop 130 horse power. So strongly built was the car that I felt that if we should turn over neither Stein, my riding mechanic, nor myself could possibly be hurt. The car had small openings in the side, front and rear. There was only one door in the car, and that on the driver's side. We came in for a lot of kidding on our design. Some of the motor editors called it the Golden Submarine, some the Golden Egg, some the Golden Lemon. The car was painted with golden enamel.

Personally, I was sure it wasn't a lemon, and so was Harry Miller. In fact, he hasn't forgiven one or two of the motor editors yet for calling it a lemon. I got a lot of kick out of indulging in match races with Ralph De Palma and his twelve-cylinder Packard, also with Louis Chevrolet in a Frontenac. But I am getting a little ahead of my story.

### Hanging Up a Few Records

During the first part of 1917 I took my Golden Submarine to Milwaukee, where I beat De Palma and his Packard in three match races at ten, fifteen and twenty miles. At Detroit he beat me. I beat him at Indianapolis. He beat me at Sheepshead Bay. Some programs I would win two races and he would win one, and vice versa. In seven matches that year I won four programs and Ralph won three. On the mile dirt tracks I beat him four to two. To set at ease the stories that we jockeyed these races, I will say that De Palma would never on earth let me beat him if he could help it, and I have always felt the same way about it. If De Palma licked me, it was because there was no way on earth I could help it.

Resolved to prove that the Golden Sub was not a lemon, I decided to see just what it would do from one to fifty miles. I did this as much out of regard for its maker, Harry Miller, as I did for myself. I had signed to join the aviation corps any time I was called on and I thought I would leave a few records behind, just to convince myself that I was not getting old. I sent to Indianapolis and got the electrical timing machine and a man to operate it. Then we went out to the mile track at St. Louis. I began by breaking the mile record of Louis Disbrow. I took it from 46⅘ seconds to an even 45. I made the five miles in 3:53.6, as against 4:06.6. The ten-mile record I put at 7:56.2, to offset the old record of 8:16.4; twenty miles in 15:52.2, instead of 16:25.6; twenty-five miles in 19:57.6, instead of 20:28.8. My fifty-mile record was 40:17.6, as against the old one of 40:57.8.

I became a victim to the general unrest. I didn't want to drive racing cars while the war was on. So I put them away. Then came the Armistice. I had got out of the racing harness and I didn't have any especial urge to get back. I had enough money, so that I didn't need to throw dice with death on the track to make a living. I decided definitely to finish with racing. I had passed seventeen years in one of the most dangerous sports in the world—seventeen years of dodging death over the race courses of the country. In that seventeen years I had been the first man in the world ever to drive a mile a minute on a circular track. I took part in more than 1000 race meets and drove more than 2000 races. I had driven every kind of car—the old 999, the Winton Bullets, the Green Dragons, the Stearns, National Old Glory, 120-horse-power Benz, Blitzen Benz, Darracq, Knox, Prince Henry Benz, Cino, Christie, Mercer, 120-horse-power Fiat, 70-horse-power Fiat, Fiat Cyclone, Stutz, Maxwell, Peugeot, DeLage, Golden Submarine. These were all racing cars. In addition, I drove scores of stock cars in various road and track events.

### Accidents by the Score

I had driven all sorts of tracks—half-mile dirt ovals that were rough even for horses; half-mile dirt tracks with weeds growing all over them; mile dirt tracks, two-mile dirt tracks, straightaway road courses, road races, beach courses, board and brick and cement speedways. I think no one can say that I looked at the track too closely. I was there to furnish the people with a holiday and I tried my best to do it. It would take reams of paper to chronicle half the things that happened over that long seventeen years. I was pained quite a bit at the time because I did not enter the earlier Vanderbilts. As a matter of fact, I did try to enter one or two of them. I recall once when I was entered in a Benz. But the Benz Import manager suggested the course be made a little safer for the boys—and my entry was returned to the Benz Import company! My early cars were track cars pure and simple and not suited to road racing. I refer to the Wintons and the Dragons. Besides, I was in racing as a livelihood. I made a great deal more staying out of the early road races than I would have, had I been in them.

I drove cars at a mile-a-minute clip on rough dirt tracks in those days—and so did the other boys—that the average motorist of today would fear to drive thirty miles an hour on a concrete boulevard.

I never kept count of how many accidents I really had. There were scores of them. I got so I didn't call going through the fence an accident unless I got hurt going through or hurt someone on the other side. I have had cars smashed to splinters under me and have been pretty well ground up myself.

In looking back, it is hard to pick out any one particular spot in that seventeen years that stands out above the rest. At times I think the high spot was when I first drove old 999, and I guess it was. Still, there was the time when I first made a mile a minute—the first man in the world to do it on a circular or oval track. There was the thrill of defeating Alexander Winton, the world's record holder. Then there was that fast trip on the Florida beaches, when I drove the Benz 131.75 miles an hour; or that wild 1914 Cactus Derby. I got an awful kick out of the performance of the Golden Submarine, the car that was dubbed the Golden Lemon by some.

I almost forgot to tell what became of Tom Cooper. He was killed in a peculiar accident in New York. I think it was in 1906; maybe later.

Ben Kirschner, who worked for me when I had the Benz cars, was working in a garage near Seventy-second Street and Central Park, New York City. It was at

(Continued on Page 140)

(Continued from Page 137)

night and a call came in for someone to take five gallons of gas to a stranded car over in the Park. Kirschner started out with the five-gallon can. Rushing out of the garage, he was crossing a street, when he was almost run down by Cooper, who was driving along in a touring car at a fast clip, while racing with another car. Ben didn't notice Cooper until he was right on him. He dropped the five-gallon can and sprang back. Cooper hit the can with a front wheel. The impact jerked the steering wheel out of his hand and the car got away from him and turned over.

I thought I had learned a good deal about tires during my racing career, so I went into the tire-making business in 1919. I am out of that now. I made hundreds of thousands of dollars in the racing game. I invested some of that money as wisely as I knew, with the help of friends. I am not a rich man, as riches go today. But while still on the sunny side of fifty, I have enough so that I don't need to worry about tomorrow. I have plenty of friends and I like to mingle with them. I love the outdoors. I have made fifty or sixty cross-country pleasure trips from coast to coast. There is nothing I like better than to get out in the open behind the steering wheel. There is something in the smell of the sand and the sagebrush of the desert that gets me. I don't know what I would do if I couldn't take a car and beat it for the hills and the desert at any time I take a notion.

I have been talking of speed so much that I suppose I should not fail to mention present-day speed.

### This Year's Records

In February, 1919, Ralph De Palma took a Special Packard Model 2 airplane motored car, the 905, with a motor several times the size of that used in a stock car, and covered a measured mile on the Florida beaches at the rate of 149.87 miles an hour. This record was not to stand for long.

In April, 1920, Tommy Milton went down to the Florida beaches and made an officially timed straightaway mile beach record of 156.04 miles an hour, with a specially motored Duesenberg Special car. This motor also was much larger than the standard stock car of the same name.

Big-league racing of today is conducted on mile, mile-and-an-eighth and mile-and-a-quarter steeply banked board tracks at Altoona, Pennsylvania, Culver City, California, Laurel, Maryland, Fresno, California, and Charlotte, North Carolina; also on the two-and-a-half-mile brick speedway at Indianapolis. The board speedways are oval in shape and are banked as much as forty-eight degrees on the ends. This makes them very fast. Races are run on these board speedways up to 250 miles. The record for a 250-mile race was held at the time this article was written by Tommy Milton. In the Washington's Birthday race at the Culver City track in February, 1925, Milton piloted his Miller Special racing car the 250 miles at an average speed of 126.88 miles an hour. For shorter distances on the same track the record has been much higher. Harry Hartz, driving a Miller Special in April, 1925, won a fifty-mile race at an average speed of 135.2 miles an hour. Single laps have been turned on this track in practice at a speed of more than 138 miles an hour.

Conditions at the Indianapolis track are such that they demand driving skill and car stamina, as well as speed. The track was built with this idea in view. Consequently, instead of two great ends with uniform curving, the track is four-cornered, with four short curves and a short straightaway between the two corners that go to make up each end. This cuts down the average speed, but it makes for thrilling racing.

The highest average for the 500 mile race at Indianapolis was made this year, when Pete De Paolo won in a Duesenberg Special at 101.13 miles an hour. Were this race cut to 250 miles to correspond with the others, the average might mount to 105 miles, but hardly more than that. In addition, though the board tracks are comparatively smooth, the Indianapolis track is famous as being the roughest racing course in the world.

All organized racing in America is conducted under the auspices of the American Automobile Association. The plan is something like organized baseball. The A. A. A. has control of all the big tracks and licenses the drivers, mechanics and officials. Under the Three-A direction, each big race must have a total prize money equal to $100 a mile of racing and the money must be in the hands of the Three-A representatives to protect the drivers, though frankly this precaution is more of a safeguard than an actual necessity at present.

Racing cars today cost from $10,000 to $12,500, depending on the number of spare parts bought. These little cars are all engined with eight-cylinder-in-a-row motors. The cars are built with a low center of gravity and a minimum weight of 1400 pounds. The American Automobile Association dictates the piston displacement.

Racing cars on the big time no longer carry a riding mechanician. As the piston displacement has been reduced there has been a cry for reduction in the size of the car, for decreased wind resistance and for reduced weight to be carried. Since May 1, 1923, the cars have been single seaters and there probably never will be a return to the two-man cars of other years.

"Big-league racing" is a term used to describe the races sponsored by the A. A. A. In addition to these, there are hundreds of races held yearly on the mile and half-mile dirt tracks of the country. The cars used in these races are largely those that have outlived their usefulness on the big time, or else they are hopped-up small stock cars stripped down to the barest details for racing. There is quite a trade in the United States in the making of racing chassis and motor heads for the small racers, which are in large degree Fords or Ford derivatives. Some of these little cars are very fast—some of them have even participated in the big Indianapolis race, winning as high as fifth place. From the ranks of the brave boys who flirt with death on the half-mile and mile dirt tracks come the big-league drivers of the paved speedways.

### Fanless Cars

A famous fiction writer wrote a motor racing story for a monthly magazine a year or so ago. In it he had his hero receive a bonus from the maker of the fan with which his car was equipped. Racing cars do not carry fans. A car going at such speed gets better cooling if the air is permitted to rush through the radiator and on to the motor unrestricted, rather than be delayed in transmission by the blades of a fan. A fan on a racing car would cause the motor to get so hot it would "freeze up" before it had gone fifty miles.

I have promised myself and some friends that I will go with them on a trip around the world next spring. I wonder if I shall. I have never been off the American continent; have never had any big urge to go to foreign parts.

Maybe when the time comes to pack up for a world trip I'll change my mind and just throw some old clothes into the touring car and hike out for the desert and the mountains and the wonderful canons and painted scenery that are to be found in some of the Western states.

Editor's Note—This is the last of two articles by Mr. Oldfield

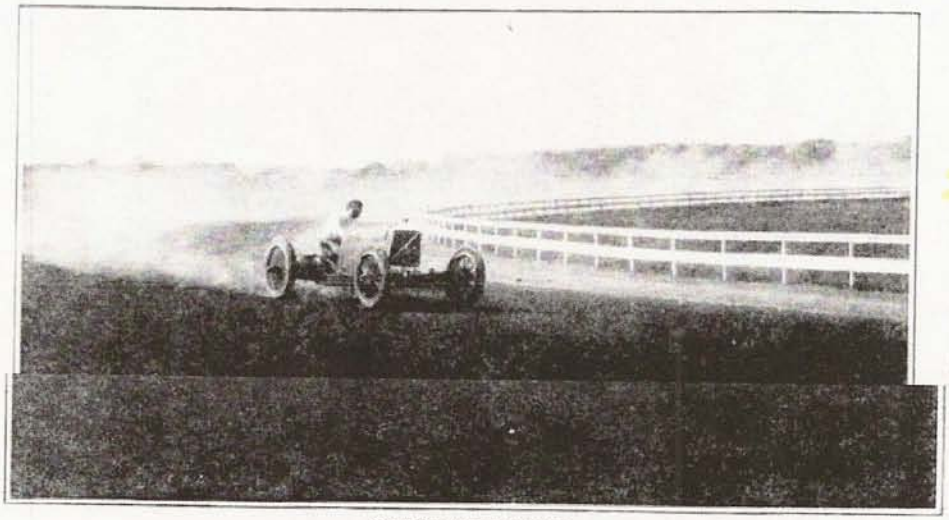
# WIDE OPEN ALL THE WAY

## By Barney Oldfield—Reported by William F. Sturm

IN 1894, while Elwood Haynes was working on his first horseless carriage in Kokomo, Indiana, I was going to school in Toledo, Ohio, and was earning money passing papers for the Toledo Blade and the Toledo Bee. When the first automobile race in America was run in Chicago in 1895, with the winner covering the fifty-four-mile course in ten and a half hours, I was riding bicycles. I was doing amateur bicycle races.

When Henry Ford made two racing cars in 1902 to advertise the fact that he was an automobile builder, I became associated with him as a general handy man, with a reputation for having plenty of nerve.

A few years later I had managed to keep pace with him in fame, though not in dollars. Mr. Ford, by virtue of his building a car for the masses, had become leader of the automobile industry; I held the title of master driver of the world. There were many fellows who, like me, had started out with Henry Ford, but had not been able to keep up with him. But I have always thought I had as much or more fun chasing him than he had in keeping ahead of me. I would, of course, trade my modest means for Mr. Ford's millions; but I am not so sure that I would trade the fun I have had in trying to make enough to keep the wolf from scratching the varnish off my cabin door.



*The Green Dragon in Action*

### *Early Years on the Farm*

I HAVE retired definitely from the racing game—have been retired for several years. I began racing when an old forty-horse track was considered plenty good enough. I have lived to see specially constructed speedways built for automobile racing. I have lived to see the boys who ride with death at their elbow make more than 100 miles an hour on a mile-and-a-quarter board track, with twelve other drivers flitting around the course at the same time.

Looking backward from the sunny side of fifty, I can remember many of the details along the roaring road I traveled. Others are not so distinct. I raced in hundreds of cities of the United States. It would not be possible to mention them all, for I raced sometimes three times a week, every time in a different town. I am going to tell some of the high lights. It would be impossible to tell all of them. And I am going to be as careful with the truth as I can. Memory may be at fault in small details, but only in small details.

In my youth I didn't hang on our front fence watching automobiles whiz by and dream some day that I would be a great automobile racer. I didn't have time to dream except at night, and I can't recall that my dreams ever held a single automobile. I wasn't at all like the hero in the story who visioned the time when he would be sitting at the tiller bar—yes, that is correct—of a sporting racer, going at the terrific speed of fifty miles an hour! I didn't really point myself to the automobile racing game. Circumstances just worked me into it some way.

I was born near Wauseon, Ohio, on a farm, being christened Berny E. Oldfield. Old records show that the date was June 3, 1878. The house was of logs and the roof sagged under the weight of a husky mortgage. Father was a farmer, and mother was a farmer's daughter and, of course, a farmer's wife. I was a farmer's son. I don't recall how it came about, but when I was eleven years old we moved to Toledo. I went to school there for four years, carrying newspapers after school.

In 1892 I carried water for a section gang during my vacation, earning a dollar a day. I had a reason for working; I wanted an Advance solid-tired bicycle and the only way I could get it was to earn it. This blow shook me up quite a bit, but it didn't shake my determination to become a bicycle racer.

I think it was in the fall of 1893 that I left off school. I put my books behind the old bureau and never took them out again. My folks didn't want me to quit school, but I had made up my mind. I bought a white apron and went into the restaurant business as a waiter in one of those fine old round-the-clock restaurants, waiting on table at the insane asylum.

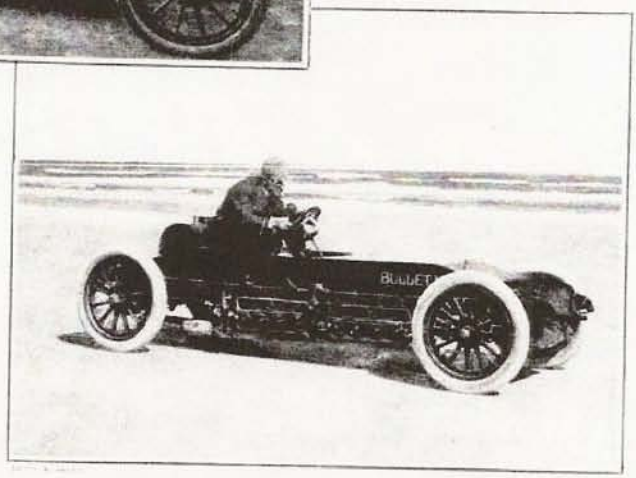
### *Cycling*

I SOON got tired of hearing about the kings and queens and financiers who were only biding their time to come into their own, so I took off my apron and became a bell boy's brass buttons for service at the old Boody House. I got a lot of fine leg work, but that got tiresome too. Looking about, I took my first chauffeur's job—driving the elevator in the Monticello Hotel.

*Tom Cooper and Barney Oldfield*

The bicycle-racing bug was still biting me, and I bought a pneumatic-tired Dauntless out of my savings. I was young and willing, but the old Dauntless soon wore me out, especially when I discovered that one of the hotel guests had a lightweight Cleveland bicycle which he kept in the basement. I am inclined to believe I got permission from the owner to ride it at night after he went to bed. Anyway, I hope I got permission. The one thing I am sure of is that I rode the bicycle to death at night after its owner had gone to bed.

*Earl Kiser Holding Out His Hand and Barney Oldfield Standing by Wheel at St. Paul in 1905*


*The Green Dragon, Not Much for Looks, But a Very Fast Car Back in 1903-06-07. At Right—The Eight-Cylinder Bullet, With Which Oldfield Made the Record of a Mile in 45 Seconds at Daytona Beach, Florida*

Deciding to go into racing for all I was worth, I borrowed a Royal Flush racing bicycle in the spring of 1894. I made my maiden start in an eighteen-mile amateur road race and finished second. I raced all that year against more experienced amateurs, taking some trophies and quite a few spills.

I spent the winter on the Montivello Hotel elevator, and in the spring the Dauntless Bicycle Company loaned me a racer and with it I won two silver medals and a gold watch. I knew what I was cut out for then—I belonged in the bicycle business. The local dealer for the Stearns bicycle took me on as a salesman and a repair man. About this time I got the idea that I could be a pugilist if I wanted to. I was big for my age, and Dan Bailiff, who was training for a bout with Yank Kenny, took a fancy to me and promised to make me into a good boxer. I went to Lima, Ohio, with Bailiff. I went back to Toledo with a case of typhoid fever. I got over the fighting fever about the time I got over the typhoid.

The Stearns factory invited me to race on its team in 1896 as a paid amateur. The League of American Wheelmen didn't like the idea and told me to turn out-and-out professional or it would blacklist me.

### On The Track

WHILE acting as a traveling salesman for the Racycle factory, Fred Titus, Eastern representative for the same factory and later more famous as the husband of Edna May, joined forces with me and we formed the Racycle racing team. We hired Ed Tellum as our manager and rode out to conquer the country.

Fred and I did fairly well—if he didn't win, I did, and if I didn't win, he did.

The years that followed were not so eventful. I raced bicycles all over the country. In the spring of 1899 I won a twenty-three-mile road race from Blair, Nebraska, to Omaha, on a National chainless.

Up until 1902 I spent most of my time selling bicycles and racing, and managed to make my income just about equal my expenses, but little more than that. Then came the big break in my fortunes.

Tom Cooper, an old bicycle pal of mine, had given up the two-wheeler, which he used to race with considerable success, and had formed a sort of partnership with an electrician and mechanic in Detroit—Henry Ford by name—for the purpose of building two racing cars. Mr. Ford at that time wasn't so well known as he is now, being what you might say without much honor in his own town. He had experimented with a car back in the 90's. In 1899 he had become associated with a company as its engineer. This company, I think, was formed by the Lelands and it afterward became the Cadillac company. He left his position as engineer with the company in 1902 to form a company of his own. Knowing the value of advertising, he decided to attract attention by building two racing cars. I think he had driven an earlier car on the track, so he was not a stranger to the requirements.

At this time the gasoline car had come into its own. The electric car was being built and also being raced. The steam car was no stranger to gas and electricity, as it, too, was being raced. The Eastern millionaires had elevated automobile racing to a high place as a sport. They had imported several of the better-known foreign cars and these foreign cars had shown themselves to be good automobiles.

Alexander Winton, a young millionaire, interested in the Winton Carriage Company, of Cleveland, had taken up the sport because he liked the thrill of it and possibly because he believed it was good advertising for his factory, which had begun making automobiles. So assiduously had Winton worked at automobile racing that he was regarded as the champion driver of America and had often declared publicly that the American automobile was the superior of any car from across the water.

But getting back to Henry Ford: He wasn't satisfied to have Winton the champion driver of America. Therefore Ford had decided to build three high-powered racing cars for the express purpose of grooming them to wrest the championship from Winton. Note that word "high-powered." Whenever a bandit car or a racing machine is mentioned, it must always be high-powered.

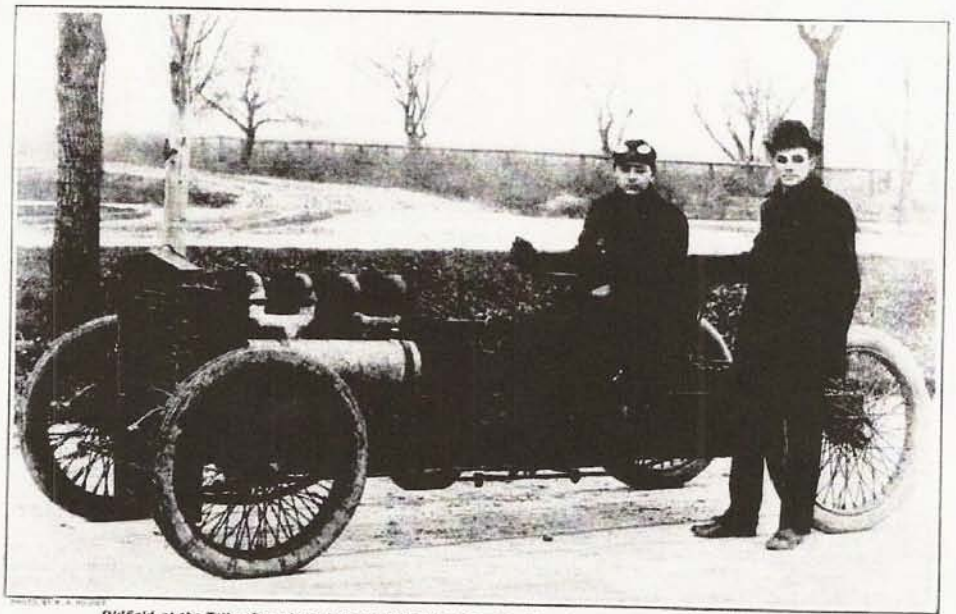
### Tom Cooper's Letter

WHILE Ford and Cooper were building these two potential championship racing cars, I borrowed Tom's old motorcycle racing tandem to take over to the board track at Salt Lake City, and spent the season on the Salt Lake track. I was head over heels in racing, when Tom Cooper wrote me the letter that changed my whole life. He offered me steady work and a chance to make a chunk of money. That last word was what attracted my attention. I didn't think anything of it at the time, but no doubt the real reason I got the letter from Cooper was because I had already earned a reputation for taking big chances. I think they figured they would need a big chance taker when they finished their two cars. But I was in for any adventure in those days that promised excitement or new pastures or a chance to fool with America's coming game—racing automobiles. All sorts of things popped into my head on reading Tom's letter. I made up my mind that sooner or later my chance to drive would come. All I needed was an opportunity. And there was the way open!

I was twenty-four years old. I had been racing bicycles so long and riding pacing motorcycles so long that the novelty had worn off. I had known Tom Cooper when we were competitors on the bicycle speed paths of the country. We had become fast friends. In the late 90's we had once quit the bicycle game and started into the mining business in Colorado. So you can see that I had faith in what Tom said.

My bell-boy days had made me an expert door

(Continued on Page 50)



*Oldfield at the Tiller Bar of the Original 999, With Henry Ford Standing Beside the First Auto in the World to Do 60 Miles an Hour on an Oval Track*