

THE GOOD THE BAD AND THE UGLY

THE STORY OF VOLKSWAGEN LAND SPEED RACING IN 2011

By Burly Burlile

2011 proved to be a mixed bag for the Volkswagen land speed racing community beginning with rain in Australia hours before the Dry Lakes Racing Associations (DLRA) was ready to open their annual Speedweek on the great salt pan of South Australia's Lake Gairdner!

The deluge caught racers en-route along the normally dry, seventy-five mile dirt entrance road to the salt flats, turning the red powdery dust into a quagmire. Even four wheel drives were temporarily stranded. Needless to say, the event was postponed until March of 2012, when it is hoped the Aboriginal deities watching over this national treasure will again smile on the salt flat racers.

A large group of VW racers were prepared to attack the salt in both the 36hp Challenge and big-block VW categories but now Team Ratmuller will have another year to refine their racers and go after their counterparts north of the equator.

Likewise, the Bonneville Nationals Speedweek, the later World of Speed and

World Finals in the United States were all affected by sudden and severe rainstorms.

The first two Bonneville events were fortunately not affected to the degree Australia's Speedweek and the US World Finals suffered, with the first two US meets being both fast and successful.

During the U.S. Speedweek, a deluge hit the nearby town of Wendover in Utah. The deluge turned clay surface at the Roads Bend site, where a couple thousand folks were camping, into a slippery mess. Many campers were caught out and required professional help to extract their motorhomes and caravans from the once dry lakebed.

The gods were smiling on the U.S. Speedweek though as the Bonneville Salt Flats themselves, just a few miles away, were dry and racing went on as per the schedule.

The World of Speed only lost its final half day of competition, but otherwise enjoyed four days of fast racing along with gorgeous skies and glorious temperatures.

That was the Ugly!

Misfortune was minor in that only a couple of the 29 Volkswagen racers at the September World of Speed experienced any type of mechanical failure.

The always fast Blackline Racing Team arrived with a 2332cc big-block VW stuffed into the back of a bright Ravena Green 1974 Bug and immediately went into the 120mph+ plus range, finally seeing a pass of 127.480mph on the timing slip in the standing mile. They encountered problems on their final pass when a cylinder head suffered a structural failure, bringing their race week to an early end.

The Harig family, Scot the dad and sons Kevin and Scot, brought their red and black '68 Beetle all the way from Michigan and managed to get two runs in before the turbocharged big-block melted a piston. They topped out at 109.051mph.

During the August Speedweek, Bob Stahl experienced gear shift problems on his fast 1965 Bug (159mph fuel injected Type 4), overrevved the motor and damaged a valve. A valiant effort and some fast mail order deliveries to Wendover were in vain as

he was unable to get in another run.

Likewise, the Burns family from Tennessee returned to Speedweek for a second time with their 1974 Karmann Ghia Coupe only to first have a cross shaft break in the bellhousing and then, after repairs, they dropped a valve in their 1915cc engine. Zach did manage a 144.752mph run before loosing the motor, however.

That was the Bad!

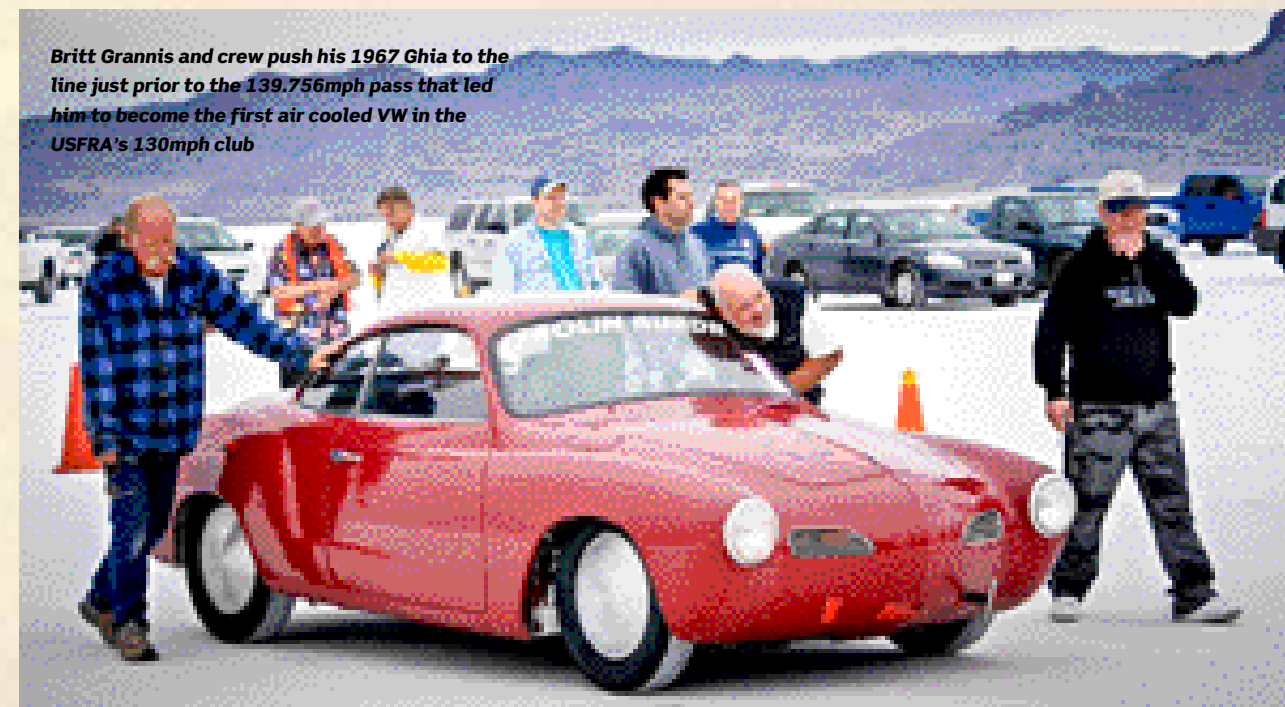
The rest was all good! During the US Speedweek, the team of Keith Pedersen and Mike Manghelli finally resolved a long standing mysterious problem with the two-litre turbocharged four cylinder VW watercooled engine in their 1980 Caddy and clicked off an amazing speed of 195.582mph with Keith at the wheel.

This boxy little truck has a stock body modified only by a front air dam and a tonneau cover over the bed; no chopping or channeling! It rides on air bags and stopping is assisted by a drag chute however, the drag from the Caddy's stubby little shape normally makes deploying the chute unnecessary.

The team returned to the salt in October for the World Finals with hopes of gaining membership in the SCTAs elite 200mph club but their effort was thwarted by the October rain. A red 200mph club hat would look good on Keith...!

Speedweek also featured a team from the United Kingdom in the form of Skoda Racing UK. Skodas come from the Volkswagen family in the Czech Republic and

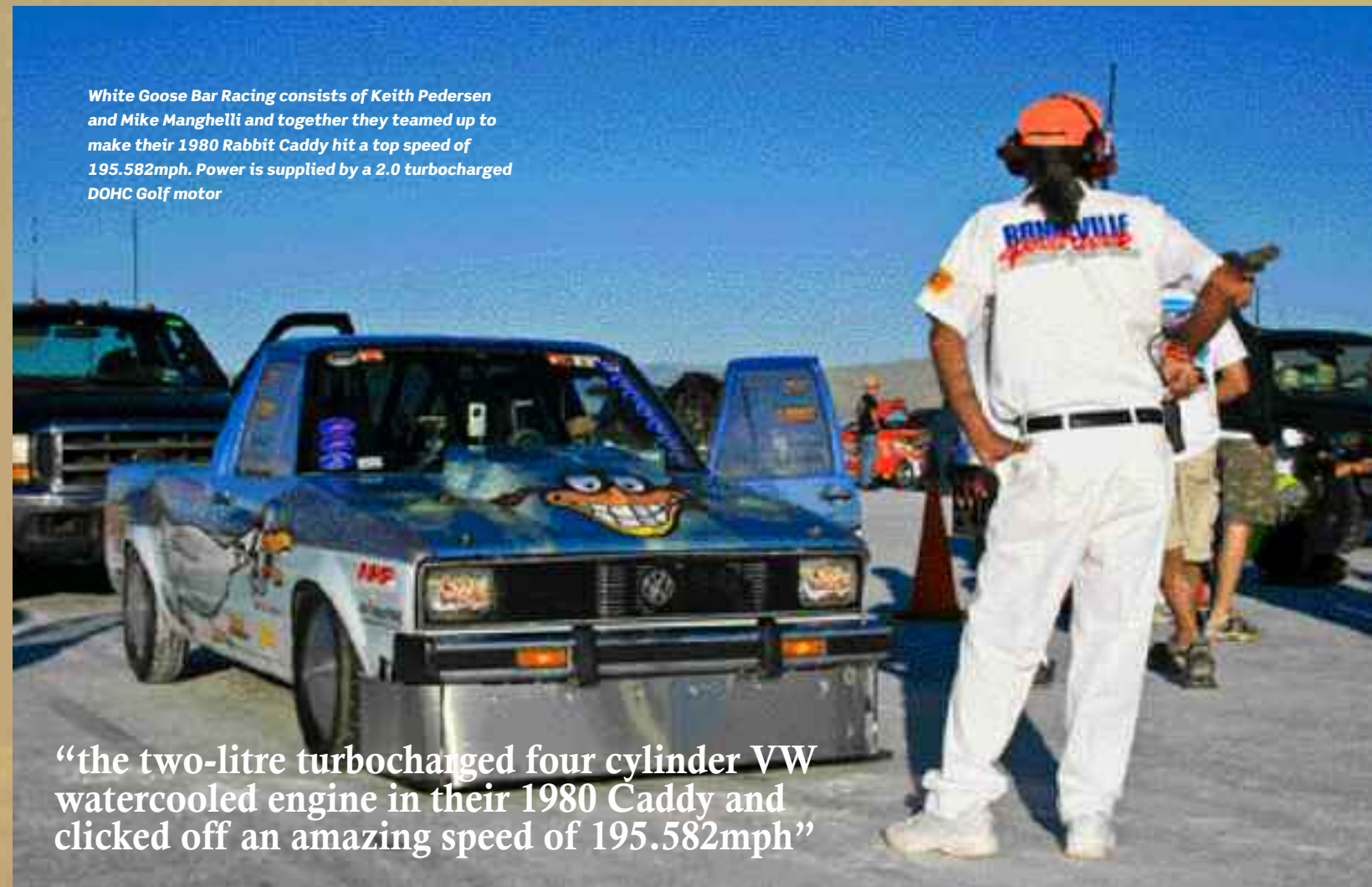
Britt Grannis and crew push his 1967 Ghia to the line just prior to the 139.756mph pass that led him to become the first air cooled VW in the USFRA's 130mph club



Spectators line the race course along four miles of salt to enjoy the racing. Some erect stands, some shade canopies and others just enjoy the sights and sounds of Bonneville from the comfort of their cars. (Or their 'little red wagon', Chevy powered of course!)



White Goose Bar Racing consists of Keith Pedersen and Mike Manghelli and together they teamed up to make their 1980 Rabbit Caddy hit a top speed of 195.582mph. Power is supplied by a 2.0 turbocharged DOHC Golf motor



“the two-litre turbocharged four cylinder VW watercooled engine in their 1980 Caddy and clicked off an amazing speed of 195.582mph”

this chrome skinned Octavia vRS sedan, driven by Richard Meaden and pumping out 600 bhp, set a new all time 2-litre sedan record with a top speed of 228.647mph and a two way average of 227.070mph... Richard 'got' the red hat!

Another highlight of Speedweek was 92 year-old Lloyd Silacci. With help from his friends, they prepared his 1970 Volkswagen/Porsche 914, equipped with the 2.0 engine and fitted with four (yes, four!) turbochargers (one for each throat of the dual carburetors!).

Lloyd slid into the seat and drove the car down the long black line for a top speed of 98.721mph. With additional tuning, Lloyd hopes to get the four turbo set-up to much higher speeds in 2012. And then activate the nitrous oxide bottle!

For the World of Speed, 33 drivers with 29 Volkswagens descended on the salt from around the US, some travelling over 2000 miles! 13 came to accept the 36hp Challenge in a variety of classes, and 12 big-block VWs came, all hoping to become members of the USFRAs 130mph club.

Seven water coolers, led by Gabe Adams and his mighty R32 Golf, also attacked Bonneville's salt.

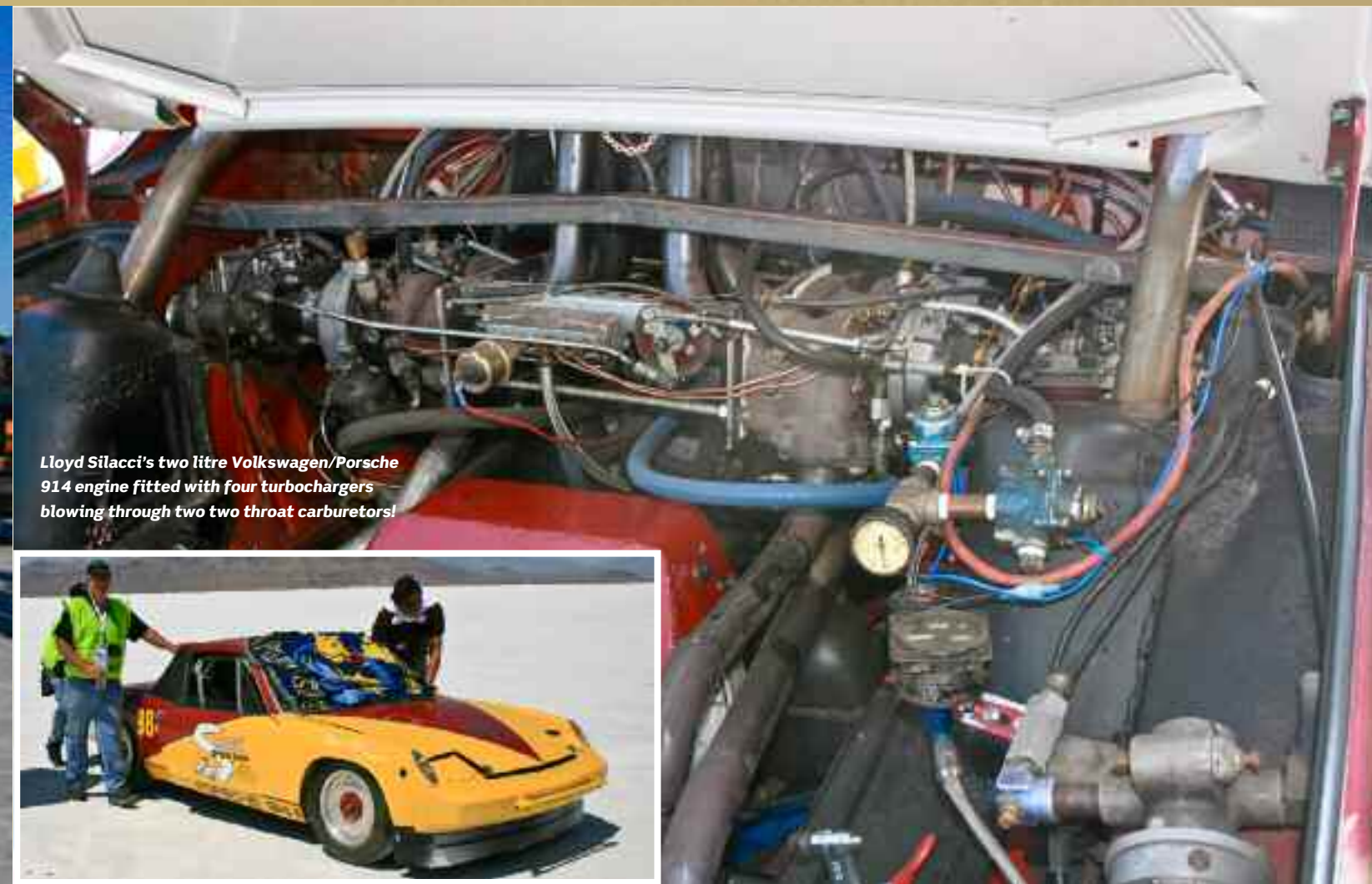
The highlight of the four day meet were the speeds set by an original 1965 36hp racer, Tom Bruch, who has been successfully racing land speed for 47 years, setting almost 40 land speed records over the

John Dahlstrom brought the second fiberglass buggy to contest the long black line of Bonneville all the way from Phoenix, Arizona, and recorded a top speed of 97.171mph



decades. Tom was the first to accept the 36hp Challenge concept and has been racing 36'ers since 2005. This year was his penultimate year, taking the mighty little 36hp engine case, mating a Porsche 912 crank and rods with used stock 77mm 36hp pistons and cylinders for a displacement of 1378cc. Tom flow tested and ported the stock 36hp single port heads to what he likes to call 'Bruchrasa' specification, featuring stock exhaust valves, springs and retainers. Then he reduced restrictions

In the early morning hours, the Blackline Boys 1974 Bug and Bill Hatfields 1999 Mexican Beetle rest prior to beginning the days racing on the Bonneville salt



Lloyd Silacci's two litre Volkswagen/Porsche 914 engine fitted with four turbochargers blowing through two two throat carburetors!



inside the engine case, added a cam and his own turbo set-up, built around a junkyard Garrett T-2 turbocharger from a Pontiac Sunbird and a Weber DGV carburetor.

He then proceeded to drive his partner Gaylen Andersen's '74 Bug to a final top speed of 126.236mph. It was not a fluke... Tom backed this up with a second 125mph+ run to claim a new all time fast speed for a production bodied, 36hp-propelled, Beetle.

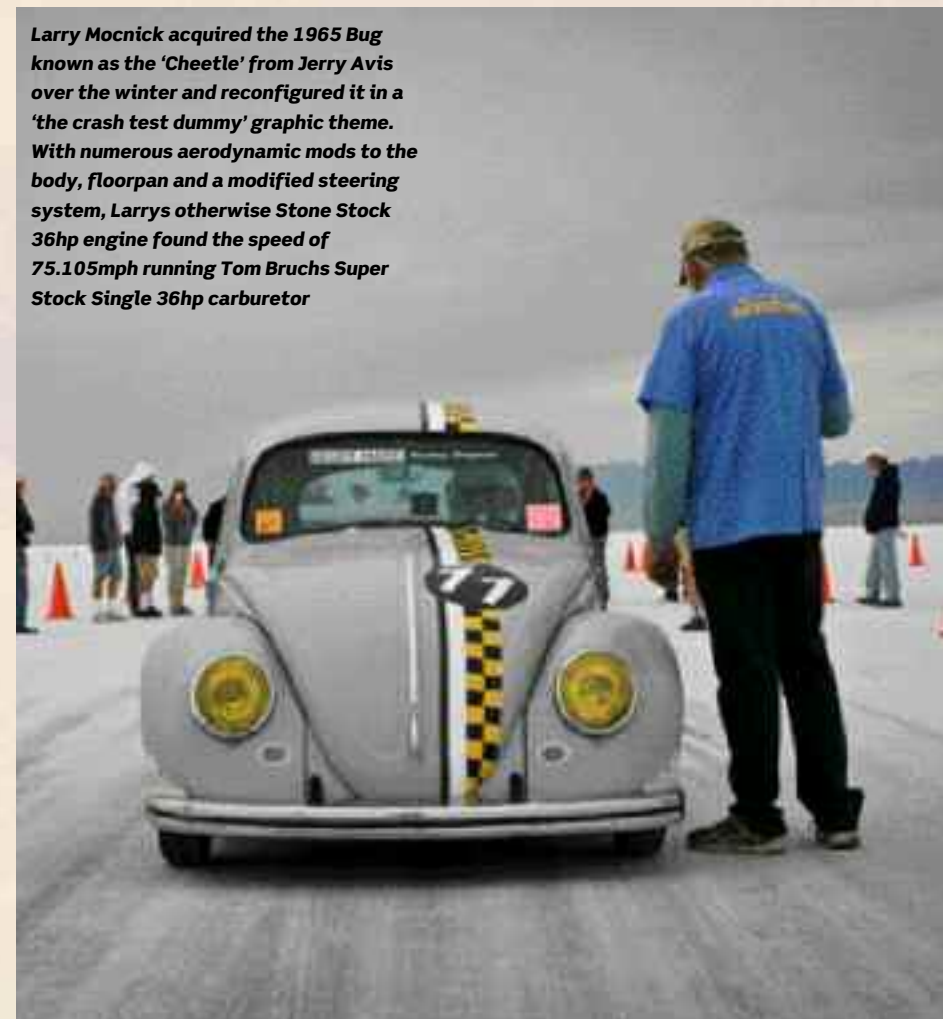
If you think about this, he was only one mile per hour slower than Blackline Racing top speed with a mighty 2332cc highly modified big-block! Whoever said 36hp engines were anaemic has never met the man known as Boneville Tom! And yes, this is a budget, home-built engine, combining old timer skills and years of experience with 'lots' of used swap meet parts.

The only new parts Tom purchased were the gaskets, main bearings and piston rings... even stock 36hp push rods were used!

Britt Grannis in his 1967 Karmann Ghia coupe became the first air cooled VW to earn a USFRA 130mph club membership when his Geoff Hart dynoed, Matt Adragna 2332cc big-block took him to two passes in the high 130mph range (his top speed being just a tick under 140mph!). In a showing of the ultimate in racing camaraderie, following their effort, Geoff and Britt offered the motor from the Ghia to the Blackline team to replace their damaged unit. An all nighter by the Blackline boys installing the engine was in vain though as Friday night's rains inundated the salt, cancelling all remaining racing.

Another strong effort came in the form of a 1999 Mexican Beetle owned and driven by Bill Hatfield from Indiana. Bills DSS36 36hp motor was assembled and dynoed in Art Thraen's shop at Air Cooled Engineering

Larry Mocnick acquired the 1965 Bug known as the 'Cheetle' from Jerry Avis over the winter and reconfigured it in a 'the crash test dummy' graphic theme. With numerous aerodynamic mods to the body, floorpan and a modified steering system, Larry's otherwise Stone Stock 36hp engine found the speed of 75.105mph running Tom Bruchs Super Stock Single 36hp carburetor



Dick Beith, the original Volkswagen land speed racer, created this streamlined version of a 68 Bug by narrowing the front axle beam 19 inches! Power comes from a 1450cc, Eaton supercharged, intercooled and fuel injected 36hp engine. His design speed goal is 150 miles per hour...



The first pass ever down the salt by a Volksrod was made by Richard Luna when he turned from spectator to racer with the help of some safety equipment by the Blackline Boys. His A.C.E. dynoed 2275cc big-block took the fenderless street rod down the salt to a speed of 119.207 miles per hour

New for this year was recognition of the Super Stock Single 1600cc big-block category. Karl Barnett's black and flamed 1965 bug runs a 1585cc stock big-block, kitted with an extractor and highly modified single Solex 34 PICT 3 carburetor and turned a healthy 107.777mph. This same engine in his lightweight drag bug sedan turns the quarter mile in 13.93 seconds at a speed of 96.8 miles per hour. The Super Stock Single 36hp record is 99.650mph



(A.C.E.) in Salt Lake City by Justin McAllister of Blackline Racing. Probably the most technically refined 36hp engine ever built, this engine, it was hoped, would capture the \$1000 contingency prize offered by Wolfsburg West. This award was offered to any land speed racers 36hp-based engine equipped with the WW 'Okrasa' style dual port heads that could set the highest new 36hp Challenge record speed. Highly modified by Blackline and A.C.E., and equipped with Weber 48 IDAs (yes, that's what I said!), Bill was able to capture the prize and set a new DSS36 record of 108.324mph as well. His engine builder, Justin McAllister, was the old record holder, and he watched as Bill took his beautiful silver Beetle down the salt to beat his record by an even 5mph. Had the rain not made Bonneville into a lake again, it is entirely possible this record might have hit the mid teens.



Herbie rides again only this time in the hands of Juan Cole from Chico, California. Here Juan takes #53 through the 130mph club technical inspection line before going out and setting a new Stone Stock 36hp record of 75.534mph

Now we will have to wait until next year to find out what the Mexican bugs top speed really is... While racing at a much slower pace, the Stone Stock (SS36) Challenge category saw three teams try to up the ante. Dan Durie, the only Beaver Geezers team driver to be denied a record two years ago, was back with a Ron Chuck dynoed Stone Stock 36hp engine. Unlike the previous attempt, Dan immediately upped the SS36 record to 75.277mph, toping his Beaver Geezers team-mates records

by almost 2mph and equaling last years unofficial 75mph run 'down under' by Greg Mackie of Steve Mullers Team Ratmuller. Unfortunately his record would not stand as Juan Cole was back with his little Herbie Bug, and struggling mightily to eek out more miles per hour.

Starting at 72mph Juan tuned and raced, tuned and raced again, finally exceeding Dan's speed during his second group of five runs by just over 0.02mph!

Juan established a new Stone Stock 36hp record of 75.534mph. The gauntlet has been thrown and now it will be up to the boys down under to take the record to Australia in March.

The watercooled contingent saw Gabe Adams Golf run a high speed of 160.047mph over on the longer 150mph club course.

Kevin Winder took his diesel-powered streamliner to a new two-way average record of 147.909 and top speed of 149.182mph while the vegetable-oil powered turbo diesel 1980 Passat station wagon of Dan Kingery found a 91.516mph top speed, smelling delicious all the way down the track.

One other World of Speed racer of note, while not a VW, but with his powerplant having historical ties to Dr. Porsche's wood burning experiments during WW2, was the 1994 Dodge Dakota caddy of Wayne Keith.

Gabe Adams shared his mighty VR6 powered R32 Golf with his brother Chris and friend Anthony Augustain to get both in the 130mph club. Gabe then got in the saddle on the longer competition course and ran a strong 160.047mph



The Harig clan from Michigan (dad Scot and sons Kevin and Scot), brought their turbocharged big-block and ran to a top speed of 109.051mph before melting a piston



Wayne converted his pickup to run on the gases created when you burn wood pellets, much like Dr. Porsche's experimental Type 60, 82 and 82E Beetles and Kübelwagens using wood-gas generators!

Wayne's final top speed was 73.098mph, after which he packed up his truck and drove it 2000-miles back home to Alabama, all without buying a single gallon of petrol.

That was the Good!

And it is not over just yet. A new Volkswagen-powered streamliner made its maiden voyages at the Mojave Mile in October and again at El Mirage in November. Called the 'Double Eagle' and based around a Volkswagen Toureg 5-litre V10 turbo diesel, which has been modified to eliminate the factory torque and horsepower limiters, this mighty engine has been squeezed inside the streamlined bodywork originally designed for Ron Mains 462mph Speed Demon

www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxbYuoTQdFw&NR=1 This racer is a serious new challenger to Andy Greene's fastest ever diesel speed record of over 360mph. Owner/builders Doug Adler and Frank Klos began the testing and tuning process to make this Toureg-powered streamliner the first VW to ever exceed the magic 300mph mark.

We wish them and all the other VW land speed racers God Speed and may 2012 be fast; real fast! **UVW**



The Bustoration team with Ronnie Fietelsen at the wheel took the 1960 Volkswagen single cab to a new DSS36 Bus record of 68.851mph, just besting Matthew Kenney in his 1957 Panel Van. Ronnies single cab is fitted with Wolfsburg West's new Okrasa style dual port heads and dual carburetor kit on a stock 1192cc 36hp engine