



Neil Bonnett
Birthdate: July 30, 1946 (Leo)
Weight: 175
Height: 5'8"

Home: Hueytown, Alabama
Wife: Susan
Children: David 12, Kristen 4

Bonnett is the youngest member of the racing Alabama Gang. The former Late Model Sportsman driver says he learned the driving ropes from neighbor Bobby Allison.

A pipefitter by trade who still pays union dues, Bonnett began his racing career in 1967 at Montgomery, Alabama. He moved up to Late Model Sportsman competition from the Cadet Division in 1971. He owns many Late Model Sportsman track titles. NASCAR ace Bobby Allison admittedly hired Bonnett in self defense in 1974. "It got to the point that we were battling each other in every race so I decided I would rather have him on my team," said Allison. In a No. 77 Chevrolet built in Allison's garage, Bonnett made his Winston Cup debut on May 5, 1974 in the Winston 500 at Talladega, Alabama.

In three years, 1974-76, Bonnett competed in only 17 Grand National races. Nord Krauskopf, an insurance executive from Indiana, gave Bonnett his first major break in early 1977 when he named Bonnett to drive his Dodge prepared by Harry Hyde. Krauskopf sold out to Jim Stacy following the Charlotte World 600, but Bonnett and Hyde were retained.

In his 33rd career race, Bonnett drove the Dodge to victory in the Capital 400 on Sept. 11, 1977 at Richmond, Virginia. Then followed that win with his first superspeedway triumph in the 1977 season finale, the Los Angeles Times 500 on November 20.

In 1978, Stacy and Hyde parted on bitter terms, the garage was padlocked by court order and Bonnett drove the car as a rental for Osterlund Racing Team. Stacy finally withdrew from racing following the 1979 Daytona 500 and left Bonnett unemployed.

Bonnett won the final IROC VI race at Atlanta, Ga. on March 18.

Industrialist Warner Hodgdon asked Bonnett to drive his racer in the 1979 Indianapolis 500 and when Bonnett arrived in California on April 11 for test in the Indy Car there was a telephone message waiting from Glen Wood of the famed Wood Brothers Purulator Mercury.

The Wood Brothers had selected Bonnett to drive their Cougar, if he would like to drive the car. And he certainly would like to drive for the Wood Brothers who won the winningest superspeedway record in NASCAR history.

Bonnett got his first win in the Purulator Mercury on May 20 at Dover, Delaware when he took the Mason-Dixon 500.

Then on July 4, Bonnett pulled the No. 21 into victory lane, winner of the Firecracker 400 at Daytona Beach, Florida.

letter
 rate
 postage
 required

Post Card

Pub. by Racing Pictorial Magazine P. O. Box 500, Indianapolis, Indiana 46206