

1933 Ford B/A Coupe

Roland Raffanti - Owner from 1957 – 2004

John Raffanti - Driver

By: Rick Raffanti

This all steel car was purchased in 1957 by Roland Raffanti, a native of Memphis, Tennessee for the sole purpose of drag racing.



In the beginning

From what the remaining family can surmise; he ran the car from like 1959 till 1974. When he obtained the car, his first task with the car was to free up weight by removing the fenders, running boards and hood and side panels. Then he chopped the top 3 inches and channeled the body 6 inches given it the lower profile stance he was looking for. A lot of enthusiasts mistake the car for a 1932 since he always ran a '32 front grill but the body is a 1933. He then focused on the motor where he



always said, "There's no other motor like the early model Chrysler hemi". Over the years he ran various hemi motors from the 331, 392 and towards the end of his racing days a late model blown 426. The car originally ran knockoffs, a quick change rear-end differential and a Cadillac transmission. Back in the day that was trend. By far he had the most fun and competitiveness with the injected 392. He also got quite known for his stroker 392 motors he assembled and even sold them to some Florida drag boat connections which



became highly sought after. He later pursued and planned for the car to go to Speedweek in Bonneville. Unfortunately he was never able to see it through due to health and finances.

Racing Days

His primary track of choice was the local track opened by Larry Coleman, Raymond Godman & Bill Taylor; Lakeland International Raceway. This is where he ran the car and unless it was a big event rarely had competition running in the B/Altered Class. He did run the car at Carlisle Arkansas several times as this was also a local track. This was an old airfield that was all concrete and drew some decent crowds but nothing like Lakeland. He did have the opportunity of meeting Big Daddy Don Garlits at Lakeland and it was a highlight of his racing days. He also ran against Gene Snow's funny car in Carlisle as pictured in this archived burnout. He also had a couple of instances with the wall as most short wheel-based altered cars do. Ask Big Daddy about the extensive bondo and door re-skinning he had to do to accurately restore the car. Garlits did a phenomenal job with restoring the car.



Memphis Rodders

Roland was a long time member of the Memphis Rodders. Among his close friends there was a comrodery often times long forgotten in today's world of the sport. Some of his closest were Marshall Robilio, Raymond Godman, Arnold Bonner, and Eddie Wilbanks just to name a few. It was like a big family.



Final Resting Place

The car ended up a total basket case as Roland could no longer chase his dream here on earth. He passed away with a garage full of old parts and many great memories. The car was at a friend's house out in the country resting in a barn, by and large exposed to the elements rusting into the past.



The day the car was picked up in Memphis on its way to Ocala, Florida August 2004.

Rebirth

In May 2004 Roland's youngest son, Rick Raffanti lived next door to a man by the name of Jim McFarland. Jim, ex-editor of Hot Rod Magazine, Car Craft and numerous others; happens to know just about everyone when it comes to cars, racing and motorsports.



When Roland passed away; Jim mentioned to Rick that this car would be an ideal car for Don Garlits Museum. Contact was made, pictures were emailed and conversations commenced. Don said he would be very interested in the car and thought it had a great history that should be preserved. After 6 ½ years to the day the car has reached completion. Don chose the restoration era when the car had the 392 hemi and the rest is as they say, history. Excellent choice!

