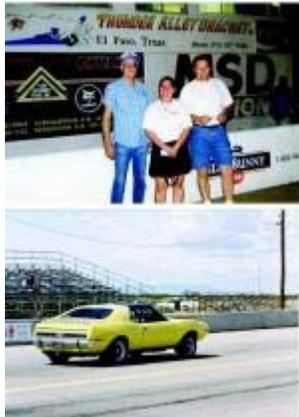




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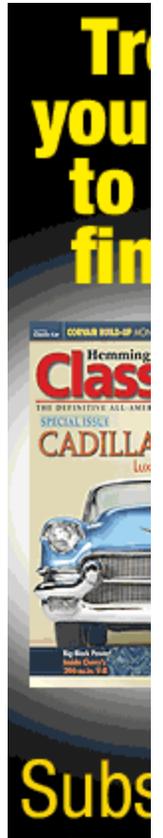
Hemmings Muscle Machines - JULY 1, 2006 - BY [DAVID TRAVER ADOLPHUS](#)

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Harry Groessel's 230,000-plus-mile AMC

It's 33 years and counting since Harry Groessel starting racing his '72 Javelin, but that's only about half of his racing career. "This upcoming year will be year 50," He told us. "Don Garlits is three years younger than me. I'm of Connie Kalitta and his generation."

Unless you count his Plymouth Acclaim (which he's been known to race when it's too wet to drive the Javelin to the track), Groessel's only had one other race car since 1961, a 1954 Hornet. Oh, he did OK in the 17-second, 77 mph Hudson, as a six-time NHRA Texas champion, six-time NHRA New Mexico champion and seven-time NHRA Division 4



champion. At the old Sunland Dragway, Ascarare Park and Juarez Dragway, his name was legend. He bought the Javelin as a new car in '72 and with it put together 18 track championships, three times at two different tracks in the same year. He's taken home more than 200 trophies over the years, and, after letting them pile up in the garage, started giving them to local youth clubs, and returning them to the trophy shop for recycling.

After moving around a little as a kid, Groessel settled in El Paso, Texas in the mid-1940s. He says that back in the day, he and his buddies would race at the local Air Force base, with the condition that the officers got a turn behind the wheel. On the track, he's been the living embodiment of the importance of reaction time and consistency in bracket racing. The Hudson was built for speed, but the only thing that isn't stock in the Javelin is the exhaust manifold, although it is on it's third 304. It runs the stock 3.15:1 rear end, sports the factory two-barrel and automatic transmission and comes to the track pulling a trailer with his race slicks on it. "Other guys show up with their car on a trailer," he says. "I show up in my race car pulling one."

It's not slow, running in the mid-15s, but one of his proudest moments has nothing to do with low E.T.s, and everything to do with hitting his time. The race on March 22, 1992, for the Modified semifinals at Roswell Dragway in new Mexico wasn't anything special, and Groessel was staged against Scott Elkin's '68 Camaro in the left lane. Elkins and Groessel were both already Modified winners, and Elkins had recorded a 14.87 on his 12.18 dial-in in his last run. Groessel left the line first, with a .474 reaction time and recorded 15.586 seconds (15.53). Elkins' catch-up bid gave him an E.T. of 12.248 with a .462 reaction time. Groessel says the track showed them tied to the 1/1,000th, so they took the results to the tower. In the end, Groessel won by 1/10,000th of a second, and as far as he knows, he's the only person in drag history to win by that margin. (If you know different, let him know.)

He also thinks his 49-and-counting continuous years of racing are unparalleled, not to mention 33 in the same car, and if you have any thoughts of reaching for his records, we warn you: He's shooting for 50 more, if they'll let him.

"I got 'hometowned' at my hometown track," he told us. "I was asked on several occasions not to race. I had to threaten the owner of the raceway with a lawsuit!"

Given his success, it's not surprising he's a big advocate of bracket racing. In an old interview, he once said, "Drag racing is a very safe sport. Anybody who drives a car can come out and enter these races if he's confident the car is in good condition."

"The more speed a driver looks for, the more money it's going to cost him. If somebody wants to get into racing, all he needs is a car that is both dependable and consistent." But he says



he's just as passionate about hating street racing as he is about the drag strip, and helps get new racers started on the straight-and-narrow, giving out his hard-won racing tips and pointers. He says he's always built his own engines and set up his own cars, and was always interested in anything mechanical... or fast. Back in his Hudson days, he was elected as first president of his local chapter of the Hudson-Essex-Terraplane club, and remains vice-president today.

"A lot of guys I'm racing against now, their fathers brought them out to the track to see me race when they were kids," he said. "We're famous, and notorious throughout the Southwest."

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