



# FUEL FOR THOUGHT

BY LANDSPEED LOUISE

*“Earning world bragging rights sets a person/team above and apart in the motorsports world. You can be damn sure they earned it.”*

## On The Record, World Record

There are too many people who want everyone to believe they set a world land speed record when in fact their efforts yielded a national land speed record. This is a problem.

Both records are to be admired, cheered and respected. In the past couple of years both records have, in my opinion, had far too many people talk from perspectives that range from honest confusion to downright sneaky manipulation.

Conversations about the differences have, for the most part, ended with the racer/enthusiast having a clear understanding about the distinction, but a few have revealed stubborn stupid arrogance.

“We don’t need some foreigner telling us what a world record is,” or something to that effect is always part of the impudent argument. In the same breath these same people will tell you how Al Teague, Don Vesco, Bob Summers, Mickey Thompson, etc. are their special heroes.

What they don’t get is that fiddling about with record distinctions is paramount to spitting in their heroes faces – well, at least on their achievements.

Unfortunately, but not unexpectedly,

claimed land speed record honors with its 999 hydrogen car a few years ago. I publicly admonished Ford’s CEO Mulally for it during a national news conference when he started crowing about the “record” in front of hundreds of journalists at the Los Angeles Auto Show.

It was shameful. Ford demonstrated it could care less about land speed racing. The galling part was that Ford trashed its own team. Although they had not set a record, the team did achieve a great technological milestone. Greedy publicists made it worthless in a sorry attempt to make more out of the achievement than there was.

Then there is Jesse James, the foul mouth poster child of unashamed liars who ostracized himself from the sport after falsely claiming to have unseated BMW from its hydrogen world record. It was all puffery to promote his goofy cable TV show.

When folks questioned his facts, out came potty mouth vulgarity, but we are all still waiting for James to bring the vehicle in question to a sanctioned event and engage sporting fairness.

Sadly, one of James sponsors unwittingly used the big lie in a press release that included a stock solicitation. I made a formal complaint to the Securities and Exchange Commission and later a member of this sponsors’ board of directors told me it cost some \$25,000 to correct the error.

A number of people told me not to challenge the media fairy tale because “no one cares.”

Nonsense.

There is a level of respect due each and every competitor who assaults the flying mile to win a “line” in the record books. The record is of primary significance with the speed achieved secondary.

Some of those “lines” require years of effort. Most teams have spent bushels of money that they dare not add up for fear of knowing how much they spent. And daring greatly occasionally means the racer pays with their life. So you bet your butt I care.

Make no mistake; I am not, in any way denigrating national records. As this column will appear just before Speedweek, it is hoped that a review of the facts will recalibrate the thought process to renew the respect due those racers who earn world honors.

World records can ONLY be set when two runs in opposite directions over the same timed mile record speeds that average higher than the existing mark within the prescribed time limit. Automobiles have a one-hour turnaround

while motorcycles get the luxury of two hours.

National records, sanctioned by recognized sanctioning authorities as the SCTA/BNI, ECTA, or USFRA, also require a pair of runs, but competitors have two days to complete the task.

In both cases the racecourse needs to be surveyed and certified, but the world record timing equipment must also be calibrated and certified. World record speed runs observed by official stewards who then visually inspect for bore and stroke. Steam, turbine, solar, hybrid, fuel cell and electric world record cars need a weight certification.

Almost all the perpetrators of erroneous record claims are Americans. Part of the confusion comes from the smaller influence exerted on, and the prominence attained in the United States by the FIA and FIM as well as the residue of neglect/disgust that fomented for years between American land speed racers and the FIA. With motorcycles you have the FIM holding the world cards and the AMA sorting out national records together with a number of LSR sanctioning bodies.

The FIA has admirably cleaned up its act and I think the land speed racing community ought to do the same.

A world land speed record is a hard-won, doggedly fought for achievement that succors speed fever. Earning world bragging rights sets a person/team above and apart in the motorsports world. You can be damn sure they earned it.

Part of the confusion stems from SCTA/BNI attempts to institute “international” records – speed marks achieved by using identical FIA record run criteria, but without FIA sanction and its withering fees. The idea never gained enough racer support and as the FIA mended fences with American racers the point became moot.

It’s one thing to say, “I have the fastest blah-blah-blah in the world,” because in your brain, under your rules, you believe it to be so. But understand that it is nothing more than cheap talk without the paperwork.

Some people even have the silly words painted on their car, or include the delusional proclamation in their team name without even knowing the difference, let alone bothering to contest a world record class.

The ignorance may be feigned or may be real, in either case it is very disrespectful to those who have conducted themselves with dignity and honor to



a big motivator is money and ego, tweaking the truth as long as it bolstered the PR message or made a sponsor look good.

Ford Motor Company displayed unashamed arrogant guilt when it falsely

*Continued on Page 204*

## Fuel For Thought

Continued from Page 14

achieve a certified world record.

For those new to world and national record party, please arrive knowledgeable, or become properly educated about the sport. Do your part to ensure the integrity of the record. Be respectfully and truthful in promoting a speed record you were lucky enough to earn.

Honor those who have come before you. Leave an admirable legacy for those who will follow you.

If you can be as humble as Al Teague or Bob Summers, fearless as Rocky Robinson, ingenious as Charles Nearburg, awe-inspiring as Don Vesco, eye-popping as Carl Heap or as exceptional role models as Tanis Hammond and Tricia Kisner, then you join ranks with an elite group of national and world record-setting individuals.

They all set their records the right way, the honorable way, not “their” way.

Note: Photojournalist Louise Ann Noeth is the authoress of the critically acclaimed, “Bonneville: The Fastest Place on Earth,” a complete historical review from 1896 to 1997. For more details on her fast self go to: [www.landspeedproductions.biz](http://www.landspeedproductions.biz).