

TEDDY

AT THE

THROTTLE

The Tale of the First Ever
Speed Record Attempt on
the Bonneville Salt Flats



By Robert L. Rampton

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TEDDY AT THE THROTTLE

— INTRODUCTION —

In August of 1976, I purchased my first classic car. It was a 1929 Ford Tudor and it was a sight to behold. I was barely into my twenties and living in Provo, Utah at the time. I had always been a gear-head and at some point I had decided that I wanted to own an antique automobile. Now the opportunity to purchase one unexpectedly presented itself and I couldn't let it pass by.

The old "A-bone" had essentially been used as a tractor to haul garbage to the dump and to pull up stumps in a cherry orchard. All the wire wheels had been replaced with modern rims and tires. The bumpers fore and aft were missing, and all that remained of the headlamps were just the buckets. The wiring was completely rigged, much if it dangling beneath the car. The engine, an old Montgomery-Ward rebuild, seemed to run well enough, but when what was left of the clutch was engaged, the poor car shook violently as it lurched forward.

After parting with my \$850 and a quick lesson on the subtleties of adjusting the choke knob and the spark lever, I drove it home. Or should I say, it drove me. I had never operated a car without brakes before. Every

bump in the road seemed to jar the Ford into a new and wrong direction, my attempts at actually steering all but meaningless. As I switched off the ignition and rolled into the driveway of the house I rented at the time, a geyser of boiling water erupted from the radiator and a cloud of steam enveloped the car. I had made it home, I was still alive and I had my old car.

Over the next five years I replaced, refurbished and restored almost every mechanical part of the Ford, learning as I went along. Eventually, I got it in good enough shape that I was able to take it on some extended tours with the local classic car club down the scenic byways and forgotten roads of rural Central and Southern Utah where it seemed quite at home.

On one of these junkets the caravan of classics stopped at a quiet, off-the-beaten-track, second-hand store. Inside, I stumbled across an autographed copy of Ab Jenkins' 1939 edition of *Salt Of The Earth*. A mere \$3 and this honest and informative account of Jenkins' early racing exploits on the Bonneville Salt Flats was mine. I stashed it away to read later when I got home.

Growing up in Utah in the late 50's few Mormon kids had escaped a Sunday School lesson on honesty, integrity and clean living without the story of Ab Jenkins being part of the sermon. Fewer still were the elementary school students who hadn't taken a field trip to the State Capitol for a dose of civics and Utah history. It was during such a trip that I first laid eyes on Jenkins' fantastic, unholy morphing of automobile and airplane: *The Mormon Meteor III*. It sat silently on its pedestal in the dark, west hall of the capitol building's basement, neglected and forgotten by the state and ignored by most of the tourists and packs of rowdy school children passing by. But as a boy of nine, I knew that it was something

extraordinary and what it had done and where it had done it were special.

Now, as an adult, I perused Ab's slim volume and studied the text and photos. A sense of excitement and curiosity grew in me about the history of the Bonneville Salt Flats and the heroic men and machines that raced there. I began to collect any information I could find on the subject and it wasn't long before I had a file cabinet full of information. One photo in Jenkins' book especially intrigued me. A short paragraph recounting the very first attempt at a speed record was followed by the image of a long-forgotten driver named Teddy Tetzlaff, grinning from ear to ear. He was perched behind the wheel of the most famous speed car of the day, The Blitzen Benz. I had to investigate the whole story.

Fast-forward about 10 years to 1989. I'm married and living in Salt Lake with two growing boys and a toddler daughter. We had moved into our first home just a few months earlier. Work and a lot of overtime on top of it all had taken its toll and I needed a break. For several years I had tried, with little success, to venture the 130 miles west, out to the Salt Flats, and see some racing for myself. That summer I pulled it off and spent three glorious, sunburned days immersed in hot rods, speed cars, racing fuel and salt. I finally knew, first hand, what Teddy was grinning about.

I now spent frequent Sunday afternoons slowly viewing frame after frame of microfilmed newspaper in the Marriott Library at the University Of Utah sorting out the story of this first event on the salt out in Utah's West Desert. Even more numerous were the many mornings spent at the Family History Library in downtown Salt Lake City picking through census records, military records, birth and death records and many online data-bases. My investigations took me to the photo archives of the Utah

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Historical Society as well as several private collections. Many letters and later e-mails were sent to museums, experts and even descendants of the participants of that first salt speed race.

Here, then, is the tale of Teddy Tetzlaff and the first speed record attempt on the Salt Flats of Utah. This is a multi-layered story of larger-than-life, daredevil racecar drivers, fabulous speed machines and single-minded Salt Lake businessmen, played-out against the backdrop of an innocent and forgotten time when America was crazy for speed.

CHAPTER 1

— A DAY AT THE RACES —

“All devotees and followers of sensational speed and space annihilation will get their fill at the state fair grounds track on Saturday.” — Deseret News

At the end of July 1914, advertisements began appearing in Salt Lake newspapers announcing the date for an exhibition of auto racing to be held at the half-mile dirt oval at the state fair grounds. In rapid-fire succession, breathless articles and vivid featurettes prepared citizens for what would be a full afternoon of high-class racing by the greatest compilation of cars and drivers ever to appear in the city. That’s not to say auto racing had never been seen in Salt Lake City. As early as 1903, local auto-men had staged amateur races at locations around the city. Infrequently, a famous driver with a monster speed car would make a quick stop en route to another engagement and challenge locals to one-sided match races and exhibitions.

What Salt Lakers were actually about to experience was a show of “hippodromed” or rigged auto races. A troupe of drivers and cars would arrive in a town with a usable horse track, amid a flurry of frenzied pub-

licity, and stage an afternoon of wild, although mostly scripted races. Throw in a speed exhibition and stir it well with a hint of real danger, then serve it up with lots of noise and exhaust fumes to an enthusiastic paying crowd and you had a speed carnival. By the end of the day, the drivers and promoter shared a nice percentage of the gate receipts, and the usually unsuspecting public walked away with a taste of the thrilling and dangerous sport of auto racing.

One particular troupe barnstormed the country under the banner of the Indianapolis-based Moross Amusement Co., with E. A. Moross as its president. In the early 1900's Impresario Moross had developed auto racing promotion and management into a profitable business. He fielded several different groups of cars and drivers that toured all over the country. Any county fair or horse track with enough seats to

THE "UNSTOPPABLE" MR. MOROSS

As the American public's fascination with motor sports began to grow, a new breed of entrepreneur evolved to satisfy this appetite for more speed, thrills and danger.

Behind-the-scenes promoters, trading on the entertainment angle of auto racing, brokered deals and orchestrated events that thrust the sport into the spotlight. By 1914, Ernie Moross and his company had risen like cream to the top of the auto racing business.

Ernest A. Moross was born near Detroit, Michigan on February 3, 1885. Branded a "live wire" and fast talker by his peers, Moross, early on cultivated the traits by which he would later be well known. By the dawn of the new century, young Moross was on the rise in the world of business and high finance. A skilled, and some might even say slippery

turn a profit was fair game for Moross and his speed carnivals. His shows always delivered the excitement and thrills as promised and a large crowd of Salt Lake racing fans was expected to attend the event booked for Utah in the summer of 1914. This booking was the only planned stop between the just-concluded Montamarathon races in Tacoma, Washington and the national road race event in Elgin, Illinois.

And what a show it promised to be. The headliners included some of America's most famous and celebrated speed demons, space eaters and fence crashers. Topping the list was the king of the West Coast drivers, Teddy Tetzlaff, two-time winner of the Santa Monica road races and holder of innumerable course speed records. Shoulder to shoulder with Tetzlaff was suave and debonair Billy Carlson, the sensational California newcomer. Racing

moneyman, Moross began wheeling and dealing his portion of the big money to be made in the young and burgeoning auto industry early in his career.

For most of the summer of 1901, a young tinkerer and idealist named Henry Ford had toiled in his workshop building a racecar. When he beat the imperious Alexander Winton in a match-race with it, investors, with Moross' help, lined up like pigeons to take advantage of Ford's expertise.

By 1902, with a new group of partners, Ford was busy constructing a pair of new bare-bones racers, with engines bigger than anything used in a vehicle up to that time. The work had bogged down and one of Ford's partners, the motorcyclist Tom Cooper, suggested they hire his friend and mechanic, Barney Oldfield, a brash ex-bicycle racer living in Salt Lake City, to lend them a hand.

The two crude Ford machines proved to be troublesome. One

fans would also see in action Englishman Hughie Hughes, the dean of American auto racing. No less famous was Wilbur d'Alene, a new driver from the Northwest trying to make a name for himself. And last but not least was Captain Harvey Kennedy, a Pacific Coast favorite. Other drivers making appearances during the show included the likes of Rudy Goetz, Sengle Dixon, and Frank Klein, all professional drivers of some note.

The stable of racing machines Moross was bringing to Salt Lake was equally impressive. Tetzlaff, Carlson and Hughes would pilot a trio of spanking new, 445 cid, Maxwell racers.

“Race on Sunday, Sell on Monday” was an axiom of the day, and Walter E. Flanders, president of Maxwell Motor Company, aimed to prove it in an effort to bolster sagging auto sales while he reorganized the

refused to operate outright. The other, when it did run was shockingly fast and the only man able to control the beast at full throttle was the fearless Oldfield. Aboard the “999,” named after a record-breaking New York-Central locomotive, Oldfield became the first automobilist to travel a mile in a minute. Taking note of the hoards of anxious spectators willing to pay to see him do it, Moross quickly signed on as Oldfield’s exclusive agent and manager.

Over the next few years, with a succession of ever more powerful speed cars, Oldfield cultivated his identity as auto racing’s outrageous bad-boy. With Barney Oldfield as the star attraction, his oily pal and sometime body guard Will Pickens running the overheated publicity machine, and Ernie Moross negotiating the contracts and handling the financials, the three criss-crossed the country becoming wealthy men in the process.

Fame and money brought

company. Tasked with the design of a team of totally new racers, Maxwell's world-renowned chief engineer, Ray Harroun, assembled a special team of technicians to help build the cars from the ground up in a secluded corner of the Detroit factory. They completed the job from start to road test in the unheard-of span of two and a half months.

The resulting machines were a showcase of Harroun's radical design ideas. Constructed compact and low to the ground to corner quickly, they were so stable they could be driven with no hands at 90 miles per hour down a straightaway. The engines were of conventional 4-cylinder layout with single overhead, gear-driven camshafts, with the intake and exhaust valves on opposite sides under detachable heads. Standard practice ended there. The most unique feature of the new power plants was the use of

detractors and frequent legal headaches, often the fall-out from some of Moross' hardball business practices and smoky back-room deals. Eventually, disagreements and negative publicity forced Oldfield and Moross to dissolve their partnership.

In early 1909, Moross signed a contract with millionaire Carl G. Fisher as the operations manager and director of contests at his soon-to-open auto speedway in Indianapolis. It would be Moross' job to advance the use of the oval with local auto builders as a test track and promote the advertising benefits gained from participating in planned competitions.

The first race, the 100-mile G&L trophy, occurred on August 9, and while the new gravel surface proved unsuitable for racing, the event drew a huge crowd. In the days before loudspeakers, iron-lunged barkers, positioned throughout the pits and stands,

fully counter-balanced crankshafts, dispensing with the heavy flywheels altogether. These counterweights, combined with extensive use of ball bearings, made the engines run virtually vibration-free at high speeds. An innovative oil delivery system ensured the engines would run with efficiency during a long and grueling race.

Harroun's final, stunning rejection of conventional practice came by configuring two of the cars to operate on cheap, plentiful kerosene. A single, special carburetor of original design, integrated with an exhaust manifold that crossed through the engine, between the cylinder blocks, preheated the fuel mixture before combustion.

It was on a trip to the West Coast in 1913 that Harroun handpicked the unknown Billy Carlson to drive one of the new cars. Tetzlaff and Hughes were signed soon after, and with full

shouted race reports to the spectators through large megaphones.

By year's end, Moross announced his resignation from Fisher's organization. During his travels promoting the speedway he had been approached by other track owners and had received several flattering offers. By acting as an independent operator, he could contract and promote races in several cities.

By 1911, Moross was president of his own successful company. From his headquarters in Indianapolis, he and his agents could have direct access to many of the best automobile manufacturers in the U.S.

The 1914 edition of the show that toured through Utah marked the apex of Moross' reputation and influence in the world of auto racing. It was also his honeymoon. Earlier in the year, the confirmed bachelor had married into a prominent Indianapolis family.

factory backing, and Moross' capable management, Maxwell went racing. The team debut at the 500, heralded with much fanfare and publicity, made the spindly, coal-black cars the talk of the trade.

To give these hot machines ample competition, Wilbur D'Alene was behind the wheel of his big 496 cid Marmon "32". Boldly painted in the trademark yellow and black racing colors of its maker, it was referred to as the "Wasp" in pre-race publicity. Once again, the handiwork of Ray Harroun could be seen in this car. Before signing on with Maxwell, Harroun had been chief engineer at Marmon and was the mastermind behind that company's highly successful racing program. When not calling the shots in the design department, he was on the road managing the company team and winning races. He will be forever remembered as the winning

"TERRIBLE TEDDY"
TETZLAFF

The Tetzlaff clan, hardworking German immigrants, headed west from Illinois in the early 1870's and established a small homestead outside Los Angeles. Theodore H. Tetzlaff was born into an energetic and close-knit family in February of 1883, the youngest of four boys. By 1902, after completing public education, young Ted was his own man making a name for himself as a teamster hauling freight into a growing California. He was wiry, but solidly built and as strong as an ox, a requirement when wrestling a loaded freight wagon hitched to a team of disobedient mules.

The new century was barely underway when news of big gold strikes in Nevada rippled through southern California. The lure of wealth quickly drew many to the district, Teddy and his young wife Anamarie among

driver of the inaugural Indianapolis 500-miler in 1911 aboard a 6-cylinder Marmon equipped with his now famous rear-view mirror. It was reputed that D'Alene's machine was one of a pair of factory "Specials" Harroun had ordered prepared for Bob Burman and Cyrus Patstche to drive in the Vanderbilt Cup that year.

D'Alene's racer was a fast and powerful machine with a low-slung look and a wide stance. At Tacoma, just a month earlier, it had gotten away from its novice driver after blowing a tire and turning over. D'Alene was out of the race, the damage being minimal to both car and driver and quickly repaired for its Salt Lake appearance. Although somewhat dated by 1914, it was still a very competitive wagon and more than capable of giving the Maxwells a run for their money.

Captain Kennedy was in charge

them. The year 1903 saw the town of Goldfield spring to life around a single mining claim. By 1906 it was a wide-open, raucous boomtown and Nevada's largest city, its streets lined with fine hotels, saloons, gambling halls and brothels. Here, Ted continued his chosen profession, hauling freight to far-flung desert claims and hell camps. In 1905 his only child, Dale, was born.

Among his peers, Teddy was known as a hard-boiled, determined driver who could deliver a load of freight to its destination faster than anyone else. He made no secret of his aversion for mules and didn't spare the bullwhip on his teams. His justly earned nickname, "Terrible Teddy" was first hung on him during this time by his fellow muleskinners.

When automobiles began chugging down the streets of Goldfield, the transition from mules to motorcars was an easy

of a big, blood-red Chalmers, the only 6-cylinder car in the group. Pre-race publicity dubbed it the “Bluebird,” a name that harkened back to the company’s earlier racing glories when the factory fielded a crack team of identical “Bluebird” racers. Chalmers automobiles, built in Detroit, were solid, smartly outfitted rigs, and among the most popular selling cars in the country. In 1913, the company introduced a light-weight 6-cylinder engine of conventional design and this engine Kennedy used as the heart of his newly constructed machine. It was fast on the straights but dicey in the curves, and performed well at Tacoma until it retired with a broken spring.

The final machine in the Moross lineup was a 180 cid, 4-cylinder Nyberg track racer, nicknamed the “Endicott Special,” in the capable hands of Rudy Goetz.

one for Teddy. The mechanically adroit Tetzlaff became a skilled and highly sought-out chauffeur with a well-known lead foot.

By 1908 he had done well enough financially to move his family back to Los Angeles and into a comfortable bungalow. There he helped found a local professional organization for chauffeurs called “The Mahout Club,” a comical turn on the social title of an Indian elephant jockey. Using the big Pope-Toledo automobiles of his employer, Teddy routinely toppled his own speed records shuttling passengers back and forth over the desert roads between Goldfield and Los Angeles.

Teddy soon found himself employed as a mechanic at the prestigious Los Angeles Lozier automobile agency, driving their monster racecars in local events, firmly establishing his reputation as a fierce and intimi-

Nybergs were assembled cars and an obscure make even in 1914, with engines from one supplier, gearboxes from another, frames and running gear from still another, and hundreds of components assembled into a handsome motorcar at Nyberg's northern factory in Anderson, Indiana, or its southern factory in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Nyberg was confident enough in its offerings to construct several racing machines over the years, qualifying one 6-cylinder car for the 500 classic in 1913. The lightweight red racer pulling duty with Moross was a filler car, intended to add noise, dust and fumes to the proceedings, and make the big racecars look that much faster.

The mechanical star of the show was the 200 horse-power Blitzen Benz record-breaker, arguably the fastest car in the world. Moross owned two of these beasts, and made them the centerpieces of the shows he

dating competitor. An impressive double win in the dual-event 1910 Santa Monica road races, along with a lap speed record, bounced Tetzlaff into the national spotlight. Reporters covering the races got wind of his colorful old nickname, using it liberally in their lively dispatches from the coast. Although he personally disliked it, but tolerated its use, he was known as "Terrible Teddy" from then on.

National events beckoned with races at Tacoma, Milwaukee, and Indianapolis — so did big-time patrons with powerful and exotic foreign machines for him to drive. By 1913, Teddy was the genuine article, even hamming it up on the silver screen, playing himself with stars Mable Normand and Fatty Arbuckle in a Mack Sennett comedy filmed during the races in Santa Monica.

Teddy's driving philosophy was brutally simple: get to the lead, set a blistering, flat-out

barnstormed around the country. From a technical standpoint, the car was as antique as the three Maxwell's were modern. It was big, powerful and purpose-built to do one thing: go very fast. The first car of this type arrived at the Benz showroom in New York City in 1909 and was promptly purchased by Barney Oldfield who whisked it away to the sands of Daytona Beach. There he established the American speed record for the flying mile at 131 miles per hour, an astonishing speed for the time. For the next two years, a speed-crazy-America made Oldfield its undisputed king. At motordromes, dirt tracks and speedways from one end of the country to the other, Oldfield smashed every speed mark and track record they could throw at him. He seemed unstoppable, and he nearly was until he made a very big misstep in October of 1910.

pace for everyone else to follow, and win. Often this got him into trouble. Many times he held a commanding lead for most of a race, only to suddenly bow out because his machine succumbed to the punishment. Famous contemporary, Earl Cooper, claimed that during a race Teddy would pass in one of three ways: under you, over you, or through you. Despite his skill as a driver, he had a reputation for pounding racecars into worn-out junk.

Outside the track, Teddy was a soft-spoken family man, returning often to his California home to tend to family business. By his Salt Lake appearance in 1914, Teddy's fame and reputation were solid, but his glory days were largely behind him.

For a \$5,000 bet and a chance to publicly humiliate heavy weight boxing champion Jack Johnson, Will Pickens arranged a one-sided match race

between Oldfield and the boxer at a New York track. Johnson, a black man with a fondness for fast cars and reckless driving, had bragged to reporters he could beat Oldfield in a race. Oldfield was itching to prove him wrong and rub his face in it. The AAA, masters of all automotive competition in America, warned him not to go through with it, but he did anyway. Enraged at his arrogance they revoked his license and banned him from auto racing for life. Defiant to the last, Oldfield announced his retirement from the game and retreated to Los Angeles to become a celebrity saloonkeeper. At the right place, and the right time, with the right amount of cash, Moross ponyed-up the princely sum of \$13,000 and change, purchasing all of Oldfield's rolling assets, the famous 1909 Blitzen Benz speed car among them.

Moross wasted little time and

WILBUR D'ALENE – "THE WILD LUMBER BARON"

Wilbur D'Alene, the newspapers declared matter-of-factly, was a millionaire who raced cars for the thrills and excitement he could get out of it. He was said to have come from rugged French-Canadian roots, out of the great Pacific Northwest. Not only was he an accomplished long-distance aviator but a member in good standing of the Royal Canadian Dragoons.

Cattle ranching and lumber mills on vast land holdings along the Montana boarder generated the great affluence that permitted young D'Alene to pursue his glamorous and dangerous pastime of auto racing. He was said to relish fishing a hidden trout stream and spent many days lost in the wilderness when he wasn't careening around a dirt track. Nary a word of it was true.

In reality, Wilbur D'Alene was a Hoosier boy, born on his par-

with a new hired gun, “Wild Bob” Burman in the driver’s seat, proceeded to make mincemeat of all of Oldfield’s previous records. He even succeeded in toppling the sacred flying mile record set a year previously by a full 10 miles per hour. At 141.73 miles per hour, Burman was the fastest human on earth.

That year, 1911, Moross traveled to Germany to convince the Benz factory to construct a car with an engine bigger and more powerful, by a hundred horses, than the original Blitzen. Campaigning one fast car had made Moross a tidy fortune — another, more powerful machine, with unlimited speed potential promised even more profits. The sky would be the limit. Benz declined, instead, offering to build Moross a second, newer, and undeniably faster copy. Dubbed the “Jumbo Benz,” it arrived in New York the fall of 1912 and

ent’s farm, in upstate Indiana, in October of 1884. Little is known of his childhood or upbringing except that the family enterprise prospered and by 1906, at age 22 when he married a local girl, he seemed destined for the agrarian life. The 1910 Indiana census listed his occupation as “farmer.”

But sometime after 1911, D’Alene’s life took an inexplicable and unlikely turn in a completely different direction. Gone was his tidy rural farm, lost or sold to a new owner. Gone as well was Mrs. D’Alene, departed in a breakup and unpleasant divorce. Wilbur now resided in Indianapolis, drawn there by the pulsing beat and steady wages of the booming automobile industry. Over time, he became a fair auto mechanic. He also became seduced by the siren call of auto racing.

By the winter of 1913 he and his business partner, Arthur Cadwell, had left snowy Indiana

was eventually christened “No. 2.”

At the heart of No. 2 was a huge 4-cylinder engine of over 1,300 cubic inches. Concealing this monolithic engine was a streamlined body with a drawn out tail and a menacing beak of a water tank on top of the radiator that gave the car the look of an artillery projectile. Power traveled to the rear wheels through a 4-speed gearbox and massive outboard drive chains. It was barely wide enough for the driver and a mechanic, so the seats were staggered. In releases to the press, Moross always upped the horsepower to 300 to set it apart from its older sister Benz, although the two were mechanically identical.

Painted the purest white with imperial eagles emblazoned on its flanks heralding its German origin, the “Blitz” was a real showstopper. No automobile had been built that could travel

and now maintained apartments in sunny Los Angeles. More significantly, the two had pooled their fortunes and had purchased a pair of expensive, purebred racing machines and were looking for a driver and crew to campaign one of them in the upcoming Vanderbilt Cup and Grand Prize races in Santa Monica.

On February 26, 1914, local man Guy Ball was flagged away in seventh position for the running of the Vanderbilt, only to have the adventure end abruptly on lap 15 when his sputtering Marmon rolled to a stop, completely out of gas. Four days later, Ball was flagged away for the start of the 300-mile Grand Prize. This time, luck smiled on D’Alene’s driver and crew. Ball finished second, and in the chips, behind Eddie Pullen’s fast Mercer.

Six months later, at the Golden Potlatch Trophy Race run on the dirt oval at Tacoma, Wilbur

over the ground as fast, or with as much flame and noise as the Benz. Terrible Teddy Tetzlaff was scheduled to make an exhibition run twice around the fair ground track and attempt to lower the local track record.

Just before midnight on Tuesday, August 5, 1914, the Moross automobile show pulled into the Union Station in Salt Lake City, and its two specially outfitted rail cars parked on an out-of-the-way siding. The next morning, the vehicles were unloaded and towed to the near-

by White Automobile Garage on State Street where the Moross mechanics began the task of cleaning and tuning the cars for their Saturday performance. Besides the cadre of drivers, the entourage staffed a crack team of mechanics headed up by Domenich Basso, a young Italian emigrant from Los Angeles. It was Basso's task to keep all the Moross-owned vehicles in perfect running order. Tetzlaff praised his expertise with a wrench, calling him "one of the shrewdest and deepest mechanics the game ever knew."

Working along side Basso was young Rudy Goetz. Goetz was a Harroun protégé at Maxwell and had been involved in the construction of the three racers. During this shakedown tour, Goetz would keep the team cars in racing trim as well as keep his boss at the factory informed about every

D'Alene sat behind the wheel of his machine, a newly minted AAA driver and a member of the famous Moross outfit. He led for most of the race until his car threw a shoe and he ended upside down, turned "turtle," in the barrow pit. When the ambulance crew arrived they found him sitting up, leaning against his racecar, smoking a cigarette, his only comment being that he gave them a merry chase while he was at it.

detail of the cars' performance.

Upon his arrival in the city, Tetzlaff paid a visit to his old friend and former boss from his mule-skinning days, Newt Bertram. Bertram now owned a successful Salt Lake auto supply store.

Around the valley, excitement was growing. In *The Herald-Republican*, the *Salt Lake Tribune*, *The Evening Telegram*, and even the LDS-Church-owned *Deseret News*, daily doses of publicity promised a spectacle. Special round-trip trolley excursion rates for the races, from almost any point in the valley, were announced. Handbills appeared on every telephone pole and wooden fence in the city, plastered there by an army of boys hired by the race track managers.

At the Fair Grounds Oval, crews had been busily preparing the track surface. After grading,

"LORD" HUGHIE HUGHES

Cagey Englishman Hughie Hughes was a well-known "old-school" veteran of the auto racing game. Born in Manchester, England around 1885, his career began at the dawn of the automobile era in Europe where he drove in the early Gordon-Bennett races.

He immigrated to the U.S. in 1906 where he found work in New York City as mechanic and chauffeur to a wealthy American family. When not fulfilling his employment duties, he was hiring himself out as a racecar driver, entering road races and hill climbs all over New England.

He scored his first victory in 1908, and from that time forward he piloted the very best machines in contests from one end of the country to the other, gaining national attention along the way.

Something of an independent operator, he was keen on the

leveling and raking, a thin layer of calcium carbonate was put down — a treatment thought to be an effective dust abatement technique.

On Friday afternoon, Tetzlaff toured the facility and after making a close inspection of the track, pronounced it to be in perfect shape. At the White garage, the place was thronged with a steady stream of speed fans eager to look over the race car monsters.

Race day dawned clear, sunny and hot. Salt Lakers going about their Saturday morning business were treated to a procession of fabulous racing machines being towed through the city and down North Temple Street to the Fair Grounds.

For \$1, patrons could get a trackside box seat, down low, close to the action. Grandstand seats, with a full view of the entire track, went for a quarter, and the bleachers were free.

By 1 p.m. the stands were crowding and a brass band struck up, filling the air with the sounds of the latest rags. At 2:30, when Ernie Moross climbed atop the judge's stand directly across from the grandstand, 4,000 eager speed fans were ready for a taste of big-time auto racing.

strategies of a race and exploiting his competitor's weaknesses, always keeping his own plans and intentions close to his vest.

He often kept his whereabouts shrouded in mystery as well, showing up unannounced on race day and quietly disappearing after the finish.

His broad smile and cockney accent combined with his fiercely competitive nature made him a well-respected driver among his peers.

With megaphone in hand, Moross welcomed all of Salt Lake to the show then gave a brief rundown of the day's events. Soon, the growl of high-powered engines and a plume of white oil smoke filled the air, signaling the start of the first event, a three way head-to-head five-miler featuring the Maxwell team.

With the drop of a flag, Moross sent the cars off with a roar. Tetzlaff and Carlson bolted to the lead while Hughes held back, not willing to take a risk on the turns. His car seemed slower than the other two. The heat seemed to be all Teddy's until the last three laps when Carlson poured on the kerosene leaving his teammates in clouds of dust as he fishtailed through the curves. He finished first, with Tetzlaff a close second, taking \$50 and a handsome silver plate as the prize.

As the dust settled, the crowd caught its first glimpse of the

"CAPTAIN"
HARVEY KENNEDY

Harvey A. Kennedy was a lesser-known character in the pantheon of racecar drivers. Born in San Francisco in 1888, nothing is known of his early childhood or family life, except that he had a younger sister with whom he was especially close.

According to a February 1915 story in the *Oakland Tribune*, Harvey Kennedy entered his first amateur auto race in 1903 at the tender age of 15. Over the next few years, he honed his driving skills at various local dirt tracks and hill-climb events around southern California. Many of his early successes were at the famed Emeryville track in Oakland, California and Madison Park in Seattle.

His racing career may have been aided and encouraged by his sister's marriage to a Los Angeles automobile man named Bert Latham. Latham was an

mighty white Blitzen Benz, with Tetzlaff behind the wheel, being pushed backwards onto the track at the far end of the stands. A corps of roustabouts, “warthogs,” Kennedy called them, wrestled the juggernaut into position. It was sheer suicide for any mortal man to crank start the beast, so the warthogs, at Moross’ signal, pushed the car nearly 100 feet down the track. Teddy, his ears stuffed with cotton, popped the clutch and the great engine started with a deafening roar, shaking the ground beneath it. In the stands, children with fingers in their ears, ducked out of sight. Men and women held their breaths, stunned by the noise from its huge, black exhaust pipes. With the car still rolling, Teddy, with mechanic Basso next to him, engaged the first gear, opened her up and made a fast practice lap to limber up the machinery. As he approached the announcing stand on his second pass, he

agent for Studebaker/E.M.F. automobiles and had tasted the thrills of automobile competition himself. Kennedy participated in the 1909 Los Angeles to Phoenix road race, finishing third after a punishing 24 hours behind the wheel.

By 1911, Kennedy had an established racing career and resided with his widowed mother and his sister and her husband in a modest house in Pasadena. In 1913, he signed on as a stock driver and all around grunt with the famous Moross gasoline show. The star attraction on this tour was Bob Burman and the Blitzen Benz team, who had played every dirt track and fair ground in the Pacific Northwest and Western Canada by the end of the season. Kennedy was offered another contract and continued on with Moross for the 1914 edition of the show.

Along the way, Harvey Kennedy became known as “Captain” Kennedy, the soldier racecar driv-

raised his hand and was off for the record. Flying into the turn, Teddy had to back off the throttle and let the Benz coast around the corner at what seemed like an incredibly slow speed. Taking a turn too fast,

the top heavy Benz might flip over, “turning turtle” it was called. But on the backstretch, Teddy gave Salt Lakers a demonstration of what the Benz could do as he blistered up the straightaway, flinging geysers of clay from the rear wheels and billowing clouds of smoke from its machine-gunning exhaust, all in low gear. He flew around the far curve, barely keeping the Benz under control and was flagged to the finish as he roared up to the grandstand. He promptly cut his magneto and the engine went silent as he coasted past the spectators to a stop.

er. There is no hard evidence he served any time in the military. In all probability, this moniker was due to his racing “persona,” invented to sell more tickets.

Moross megaphoned to the crowd that Tetzlaff had lowered the track record from 1 minute 18 seconds to 1 minute 13 and two-fifths seconds. The stands erupted in cheering and wild applause.

As soon as the Benz was gone from view the cars for the next event on the card, a five-mile open race for non-stock cars, were lining up at the starting line. There were five entries: D’Alene in his Marmon, Kennedy in his Chalmers, Goetz in the Nyberg, and Carlson and Hughes both in Maxwells.

As the flag dropped and the cars roared off, Carlson, with D’Alene camped on his tail, took an early lead. The track surface was very dry and when the cars slid around the corners, especially the south turn, so much dust was churned up that officials feared the cars might not be able to see

and plunge through the fence on the turn. Early into the race Captain Kennedy's Chalmers inhaled a load of dust and began sputtering and choking along. Never able to gain any speed, it slowed down the rest of the racers as they maneuvered around it.

Goetz in the Nyberg-4 was having trouble as well. His car seemed to be built too high off the ground and when he entered a turn, the car became uncontrollable, forcing him to back off the throttle lest he "aero plane" through the fence.

Carlson kept the lead throughout the race, but D'Alene dogged him every foot. Billy and his Maxwell were blisteringly fast on the straightaway, but D'Alene, driving at a consistent pace, proved masterful on the turns, keeping his big Marmon under complete control. He and Carlson lapped the rest of the field twice, taking

"THE UNDERTAKERS DELIGHT"

Jokingly dubbed as "The Undertakers Delight" and called "willful murder" by one California newspaper, the exact origins of auto-polo are a mystery. In 1902, wealthy and idle members of a Boston motoring club staged a polo match using steam runabouts instead of horses. Drivers controlled the vehicles as well as wielded the mallets with ultimately comical results. Not until 1908, with the introduction of the Model T and the addition of a separate mallet man, did genuine auto-polo take shape. A number of promoters staged matches at fairs along the East Coast and it proved to be popular with spectators.

But clues to its early, organized beginnings point to the small town of Natoma in northwest Kansas. Around 1910, an enterprising Ford agent named "Dot" McEwen dreamed up the sport as a way of promoting Model T's at town celebrations and county fairs. No car

first and second place, Billy taking \$200 and the silver plate as prize.

During intermission, the technologically enlightened sport of auto-polo was presented. Played on the track infield, directly in front of the grandstand, Salt Lakers weren't quite sure what to make of it. Nothing like it had ever been presented there before. The two teams had two cars each, one team painted red the other blue, one trying to score a goal, the other defending it. Play consisted of three 15-minute periods with Moross and his ever-present megaphone acting as referee.

The Blue Team started out to finish the game quickly, but lost momentum after the Red Team scored its first goal. The match became a rout as the Red Team scored twice more in the first period and once in the second. Auto-polo seemed to be something of a yawner until all-pur-

but the ubiquitous Tin Lizzy, with its pedal controlled planetary transmission, hand-operated throttle, and tight turning radius could execute the maneuvers needed for his game. The used flivvers were stripped of all recognizable body parts and outfitted with strap-iron roll cages, a driver's seat and a low passenger side running board for the mallet man.

Before long, teams from other towns began challenging McEwen's Natoma team. Spectators couldn't get enough of it and the sport became a regional phenomenon. McEwen toured his team into Colorado and Wyoming, the game was played at the Polo Grounds in New York, and teams sprang up on the West Coast and even as far as Australia. One promoter, Ralph Hankinson, took his teams on a world tour, playing to big audiences all over Europe. Anyplace in the world where Model T's were sold, it was an even bet auto-polo

pose driver Goetz, making a hard turn with the throttle wide open, rolled his flivver over, flinging his mallet man high into the air. The crowd gasped, jumping to its feet, anticipating the sight of a driver crushed beneath his car. Alas, it was all part of the show. Goetz was belted firmly in his seat, and in just seconds, the Ford was righted and play continued. The Red team scored the final goal and was declared the winner 7 to 0. Most of the spectators enjoyed this stripped-down version but agreed that auto-polo would be much more thrilling with several more cars and a larger playing field. The cars at the fairgrounds track just didn't seem to have enough room to maneuver.

was not far behind.

Serious, competitive, auto-polo was a metal twisting, bone-crunching affair. The action was fast and furious as cars zipped across the playing field, maneuvering into position. Frequently there were "wheel-overs" when two cars would lock axles, sending one car jumping on top of another. Broken limbs, flesh wounds, and players knocked cold were common occurrences. The spectators loved it. It was probably on a junket through the region that Moross, always on the lookout for the new and sensational, witnessed a game and decided to make it part of his show.

Other heats included a five-mile open race for non-stock cars, again won by Carlson, and a free-for-all, best two out of three with a spectacular flying start. Tetzlaff won both these three-milers easily, taking the silver plate and the \$100 prize. It was during the second heat of the free-for-all that horrified observers spotted a milk-cow and her calf that had wandered onto the backstretch through an unlocked gate. A frantic Moross

began waving his yellow flag to slow down the field, but the three leaders were unable to see him through the dust. As they barreled down the backstretch, the roaring of their engines spooked the cow and she and her calf jumped the fence into the infield, just in the nick of time, narrowly averting what surely would have been a gruesome pile-up.

The finale of the afternoon was a five-mile handicap race with the cars flagged off at intervals, Tetzlaff starting from scratch. This heat gave Teddy a spectacular opportunity to show the crowd what he could get out of a car. With his rear tires churning up rooster tails as he bolted away, he quickly passed Carlson, keeping his Maxwell at full speed, only slowing slightly on the turns. Maneuvering around the rest of the field he lapped everyone twice. On the last two laps he seemed to abandon all caution, especially on the curves, pouring on the gas, wildly sliding his Maxwell, almost sideways, into the straights. He soundly beat everyone, taking down another \$100 prize. With the stands cheering the feat, the great auto racing show came to a close. Everyone agreed that it had been an amazing exhibition of speed and daring.

The Moross outfit packed up its equipment and headed north to the city of Ogden where an almost identical Sunday afternoon show was staged, complete with an overturned auto-polo car, before a smaller, but enthusiastic crowd of 1,000.

And that might have been the end of the story had it not been for a character named Bill Rishel.

CHAPTER 2

A PLAYGROUND FOR — SPEED DEMONS —

“Have any of our readers ever stopped to ponder and figure out just what it means to travel at this death defying pace – a speed that is only surpassed by that of a bullet? ‘Shades of Allah,’ is such a speed really possible?” — Salt Lake Evening Telegram

In private rooms, on an upper floor of the Hotel Utah, selected members of the Salt Lake Rotary Club were quietly holding a meeting. Present were Frank Murphy and Charles Tyng, both respected local businessmen, and Bill Rishel, energetic secretary of the Utah Auto Club. The agenda that day was to tie up the latest set of plans in the ever-escalating succession of skirmishes in the war over Utah’s roads.

Unfortunately, Utah had the infamous, but justly earned reputation as a vast mud hole and sand pit among transcontinental motorists. The principal obstacle diverting cross-country auto travel was Utah’s great West Desert with its treacherous and endless mud and salt flats, causing most motorists to opt for a less perilous southern or northern route, skirting Salt Lake City and its many business opportunities altogether. This fact was

not lost on the many highway associations that sprang up along these routes to promote them, and it was certainly not lost on Bill Rishel and his gang of compatriots in the Salt Lake Rotary Club. The West Desert diversion was finally breached in 1907 when the Western Pacific Railroad opted not to circumvent the barren region, and laid their tracks directly west of Salt Lake City, across the heart of the wasteland, in a dead straight line to the Nevada boarder and the dusty hamlet of Wendover.

The first salvos fired in this roadway donnybrook occurred in 1913 when it was announced that a caravan of automobiles would push through Utah that summer, scouting routes for the newly proposed Lincoln Highway, the nation's first coast-to-coast automobile road. Founded in 1912, and funded by heavy-hitters in the Indiana auto industry, the Lincoln Highway

“BIG BILL” RISHEL SIDEBAR

W. D. (Bill) Rishel was born in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, in 1869. His father, upon discharge from the Union Army, returned to his livelihood as an itinerant carpenter. The family was frequently on the move, staying for brief periods in Ohio, Oklahoma, and Colorado, finally settling in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Cheyenne, in the 1880's, was an invigorating mix of cowboys, rail-roaders and English cattle barons. In this stimulating atmosphere, the athletic Bill grew into an accomplished distance runner, boxer, and swimmer. He also had a reputation for being a devil of a bicyclist. At over six feet tall and weighing in at 225 pounds, he was simply “Big Bill” to everyone.

Cheyenne, he remembered, “had the worst case of ‘handle-bar fever’ in the country.” As a member of the popular Cheyenne Bicycle Club, he helped organize many long-distance relay races

Association's plan for a continuous gravel road from New York to San Francisco was a grand and noble project. In most states, the highway was enthusiastically embraced, and with the help of local governments and civic groups, construction had already begun. But, it was a different story when the Association motorcade came to Utah.

Early on, Rishel and his supporters in the auto club had envisioned a direct auto route to Sacramento and the coast, through Salt Lake City, and paralleling the Western Pacific grade into Nevada. Now with the convoy at the state's doorstep in Colorado, Rishel tried repeatedly to meet with the Association scouts to present his proposal. He was rebuffed at every opportunity. When the procession finally rolled into Salt Lake City, and he was summoned for a meeting to discuss the highway

and timed speed trials. Bill Rishel claimed to have been the first man in the entire country, with a stiff Wyoming gale at his back, to travel a measured mile on a bicycle, in under two minutes.

When the Union Pacific went bankrupt in 1892, hard times came to Cheyenne. Unable to find work, Bill's father decided to take the family back to Pennsylvania. But Bill loved the adventurous West and with all his options open and his life before him, he decided to make his own way in the world.

He packed his valise and headed for Salt Lake City. Bicycling was just beginning to bloom in Salt Lake. Here he found an enthusiastic cluster of cyclists eager to learn the game. By 1896, Rishel was Salt Lake's top wheelman, promoting and managing races at the city's newly constructed bike track.

That same year, newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst conceived the idea of a great coast-to-coast bicycle relay.

through Utah, he told them to go to hell. The battle was on, the prize being the final route of the transcontinental highway west of Salt Lake City.

The problem, as Rishel saw it, was that the Lincoln Highway Association chose to direct tourists over a long and meandering trail, loosely following the old Pony Express route, into central Nevada. The path, often nothing more than faint wagon ruts, would take motorists into some of Utah's most remote and inhospitable territory.

Outspoken Rishel, now inserted squarely in the middle of the fracas, began to use his sizeable influence to lobby for his Wendover route, eventually convincing his employer, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, to put its editorial weight behind the proposal. This road, called the Wendover Cutoff, became Rishel's passionate cause, and

When he needed someone to scout the route through Nevada and Utah, and manage the first, most difficult leg of the relay, from San Francisco to Salt Lake, he contacted Bill Rishel.

Wanting to avoid, as much as possible, the lengthy trail around the north end of the Great Salt Lake, Rishel opted to follow parts of the Overland trail cutting directly across Utah's bleak western desert.

Starting at 2:00 a.m. to avoid the heat of the day, he and a companion began from the lonely outpost of Terrace, in western Utah, and pedaled southeast over the treacherous alkali flats. Twenty-two hours and nearly 100 miles later, they reached civilization, dehydrated, mud-covered and nearly eaten alive by mosquitoes. They became the first and only men to have crossed the vast salt flats by bicycle.

One month later, readers of Hearst's newspapers all across the nation thrilled to the relay

with an organized group of Salt Lake businessmen behind him, he began an active campaign to spoil the Lincoln Highway Association's plans to improve its road through Western Utah.

It was on a fact-finding junket regarding this new route to Wendover in the summer of 1911 that Rishel persuaded an acquaintance living there, to go on an adventure. Ferg Johnson was the proprietor of Wendover's only dry goods store, and despite living in the middle of nowhere, Johnson had not been discouraged from purchasing a motorcar. It was a powerful 4-cylinder Packard touring car, the perfect vehicle for Rishel's planned expedition.

Early one morning they motored east out of town, along the railroad grade bound for the vast, empty salt flats. The trip was rife with hazards.

exploits of Bill Rishel, "Bedouin of the alkali desert."

Less than a year later, the bottom fell out of the over-saturated bicycle market and the frenzy was over, except in Salt Lake City, where cycling and bicycle racing flourished long after it had died out across the rest of the country. Rishel kept the flame burning as manager of the Salt Palace bicycle track, which by 1901 was the country's only existing, electrically illuminated, wooden bicycle-racing arena.

The growing popularity of the "horseless carriage" would eventually bring the demise of bicycling in Salt Lake City. Rishel viewed this as a natural progression of things. He enthusiastically embraced the new automobile invention and loved its possibilities. He recognized many familiar bicycle technologies now being put to full use in the new machines.

In his capacity as sporting editor of the *Salt Lake Herald*, it was his job to keep the public informed

They encountered thick gray mud, lurking just under the thin salt crust, which could maroon a heavy Packard up to its hubs in minutes. To avoid more than a few dire stretches, they wrestled the car onto the tracks and bumped along over the ties. Several near disasters and 10 miles later they finally reached Salduro Siding in the center of the vast, deserted saltpan.

Here the salt layer was hard and thick, and Rishel and Johnson had no fear about the car breaking through the surface. All around them the salt stretched for miles in every direction. The enormity and solitude of the place was overpowering and so was the urge to have some fun. With no fences or ditches to hinder them, they opened up the Packard and headed out on to the crystal white salt flats at 55 miles an hour. Such rapidity was exhilarating. Rishel had seldom traveled this fast in an automobile,

about this new device.

He also linked this new mode of transportation with the possibility for increased commerce and almost single-handedly invented the idea of tourism as an industry in Utah. As early as 1900, Rishel began producing road maps of the region. After several automobiles had traversed the continent, Rishel began getting inquiries from motorists wishing to travel through Utah. He established the first auto club in Utah in 1902 and by 1905 had published his first book of maps called "Rishel's Routes" distributing them through what may have been the first working tourist bureau in the country.

Rishel became a champion of the "Good Roads" movement in Utah, organizing civic and trade groups into potent lobbying tools, pressuring state and local governments to invest in road building. In 1911, Rishel became the auto editor for *The Salt Lake Tribune*, and embarked on the first of his pioneering pathfinder excursions into

and he likened the experience to riding on a bullet. At that moment he conceived the notion that this was potentially one of the greatest venues for racing automobiles anywhere in the world. On its salty snow-white surface could be built a colossal speedway that would surpass the bricks of Indianapolis or the beach at Daytona, and it was, literally, right in his own back yard.

the roadless regions of the state.

Driving a car sponsored by his newspaper, and furnished by a local auto dealer, Rishel drew simple maps and kept detailed logs on directions and conditions along the route. The entire journey was then published as a feature in the paper. Bill Rishel's maps became essential equipment carried by any courageous motorist brave enough to take a cross-country tour through the West.

This idea percolated in Rishel's head for three more years until early 1914 when his old friend, Frank Newman, manager of the Utah Fair Grounds racetrack, left for the West Coast to ink a deal with the Moross Amusement Co. for the August 1914 show at the Fair Grounds.

As an automotive expert, Rishel was well aware of promoter Ernie Moross and that in his stable of racecars was the fastest speed car in the world. Newman left with a proposal in his pocket to put that car to the test on the salt flats while in Utah for the Salt Lake and Ogden exhibitions, and hang up a new record for the flying mile. Such an achievement would establish Utah as the mecca of speed, thought Rishel, and the automotive world would flock to the region every year, over a fine, straight highway, to use the salt flats course. If he could get Moross on board, Rishel would have his long hoped-for opportunity to focus the spotlight on his saline speedway idea and, at the same time, promote the Wendover

Cutoff as the preferred auto-route to the West.

Ernie Moross's initial response was one of amusement but disinterest. After the Utah engagements, his cars and drivers were headed east to race and needed all the time available for practice and repairs. Even more, he was unwilling to front the costs for wild adventure in such a remote, desolate location. Rishel was unfazed, and soon marshaled friends and supporters in the Rotary and Commercial clubs to sponsor and organize the event and absorb some expenses. In early July, while Moross was in Tacoma for the races there, Rishel contacted him by phone at his hotel and proceeded with the hard sell. Ever skeptical, Moross wouldn't easily commit, but he did agree to accompany Rishel and other businessmen on a brief, informal inspection trip to the salt flats upon his arrival in Salt Lake.

On Thursday, August 6, Moross, Rishel, and Frank Murphy of the Salt Lake Rotary Club boarded the Western Flyer for Wendover, arriving there at about 3 a.m. on Friday morning. At daybreak, Rishel took a hired stage and guide and headed out onto the flats, reaching Salduro several hours later. Moross was completely taken back by the almost unknown natural wonder that spread out endlessly before him. A recent rainstorm had left the surface somewhat moist, but the local guide assured him that several days of near 100-degree heat would quickly harden the salt into a perfect surface for racing automobiles. Rishel cinched the deal with an offer from the Western Pacific to deliver Moross' racing equipment to Salduro free of charge if the Rotary and Commercial Clubs could sell at least 150 seats at \$25 each on a special excursion train to the salt beds to witness the record attempt. Furthermore, Rishel would act as official observer representing the American Automobile Association (AAA), making any new records legitimate. With almost none of his own money at risk and the possibility of a new speed record laid at his feet, Moross could hard-

ly resist. An agreement was drawn up and the travel schedule adjusted. The Salduro speed meet was on.

After the show in Ogden, the party left Salt Lake for the salt beds on the night of Sunday, August 9, arriving at Salduro Siding just before daybreak. Little time was wasted detraining the racecars, one by one. First the Benz, then the three Maxwells, then the Nyberg and Marmon, along with several auto polo cars, all lined up side by side on the salt, so cleaning and adjusting could begin. Absent was driver Hughie Hughes. As was his custom, he quietly slipped town after the Ogden engagement.

Salt Lake civil engineer Frank Jacobs was present, and at daybreak he set about his task of surveying and marking a course for the official record attempt. His track design was a gently curving arc, two miles long and 200 yards wide, running parallel to the train tracks and telephone poles from east to west. The measured mile, where the official timers would be stationed, was laid out adjacent to the siding, on the south side, so spectators could watch from the train. Wooden stakes topped with red flags marked the course's boundaries, and Jacobs declared that if the speedway followed itself around, back to its beginning, it would scribe a circle 30 miles in circumference. Timing would be accomplished by posting flagmen at each end of the measured mile. At the one-mile mark were stationed the timers and observers. At the moment a car entered the course at the eastern end, a flagman would signal to the timers to click their stopwatches. As the car left the course a flagman would signal the timers to stop. Several timers would click off at the half-mile mark giving multiple readings to compare.

Trying to keep the leash on a handful of hotshot racecar drivers, itching to try something new, proved impossible. Before the sun was fully up,

Tetzlaff and Carlson bolted away in their Maxwells and soon disappeared into the emptiness of the flats, their faint engine noise the only indication of where they were. D'Alene and the others quickly followed suit, madly tearing off in all directions. Fifteen minutes later, they converged all at once on the pit area, prompting members of the Moross gang to compare them to a herd of giant ants, scrambling across some immense white floor. Carlson had great fun buzzing the men in the pit area. Speeding towards the siding from the east, his car seemed to be floating above the surface, riding on a glassy layer of shimmering surface air. When he finally pulled to a stop, he leaped from his machine and gleefully reported he had traveled nearly 90 miles per hour according to his speedometer.

Basso and his mechanic crew, that first day out, faced several new and uncertain challenges. The first was carburetion. It was thought that the thinner atmosphere of Utah's high altitude would adversely affect the cars' high-speed performance. The temperamental Maxwells were especially difficult to calibrate, but it was hoped that with only minor adjustments all the vehicles, especially the Benz, would run smoothly. For the moment, Billy Carlson's kerosene burner sat, happily barking out its distinctive exhaust note, with little trouble.

The second concern was tires. Tire casings on racecars didn't last long. The heat and friction caused by racing on dirt, asphalt or wooden planks often ended with shredded tires or worse, a blow out. The effect of salt on a tire at high speeds was completely unknown. Upon inspection of the Maxwell's salt-caked wheels, it was discovered that the tires were barely warm, in fact, to everyone's utter amazement, the moist salt, which was clinging to the soles of everyone's shoes, seemed to have a cooling effect on the tires. It was also believed that traction would greatly improve over the next few days as the sticky salt dried out. They praised the salty nat-

ural wonder and agreed it had lived up to all Bill Rishel's claims for it as a playground for speed demons.

Sporadic highballing and constant adjusting continued through the day, even though the temperature hovered near 100 degrees. Once the sun went down and the temperature cooled, the first serious speed trials began. An auto-polo car towed the Benz, with Tetzlaff and Basso in the cockpit, followed behind by Carlson and D'Alene far out onto the salt for a first shakedown. Tetzlaff would start off heading east, and then make a wide sweep around to the west onto the measured course, building speed as he came. At Teddy's signal, the tow car gave the Benz a tug, and the great engine quickly fired up. With first gear engaged, he pulled away, gradually gaining speed as he headed onto the course. Second was engaged, then third, then near disaster. Thick smoke abruptly billowed into the cockpit from under the car's long hood, momentarily choking driver and mechanic. Teddy felt a lick of flame and quickly cut the ignition. A leak in the fuel pipe into the car's huge single carburetor had ignited a fire, a dangerous situation owing to the volatile gasoline and ether fuel mixture. A shut-off valve, and some quick thinking by mechanic Basso, extinguished the blaze, the only noticeable damage being some blistered paint on the hood. Before it even had a chance to be turned loose, the Blitz was towed back to the encampment for a thorough going-over.

This wasn't the first time this problem had occurred with the Benz. Nine months earlier, at a December beach meet in San Diego, the car had burst into a fireball during an exhibition run. Traveling at nearly 100 mph, the flames and smoke engulfed driver Bob Burman, blinding his forward vision. He managed to slow the car down sufficiently then deftly coasted it into the surf, extinguishing the blaze. Pulled from the ocean, Moross

inspected the damage to his investment. The blackened hood had buckled from the heat and collapsed onto the engine. The carburetor and oil pump were completely destroyed. Burman had managed to escape being severely burned by wearing a heavy leather helmet and gloves. Now caution prevailed. The nearest water was a hundred miles away and Tetzlaff and Basso wore no protective gear. It was pure luck the car and its driver hadn't been burned to ashes.

Tuesday saw speed trials on the course throughout the day. A crowd of curious onlookers, workers from the Utah Salduro Mining Co., had started to filter out onto the salt to see what all the noise was about. A number of people in motorcars had also braved the trail out from Wendover to observe. Everyone in the Moross party was on edge as speeds began to inch higher and higher. Both Carlson and Tetzlaff, driving their Maxwells, posted speeds close to 95 mph through the measured mile. D'Alene pushed his Marmon near the 90 mph mark. One thing became noticeable. The cars all ran better and faster in the heat of midday rather than in the cooler early morning or late afternoon hours. It was generally decided that the hot noonday air aided carburetion, helping the fuel combust more efficiently.

At one point during the day, Carlson and D'Alene, while doing some fast joyriding, encountered a westbound passenger train as it entered the salt flats from the east. The Western Pacific had clocked its two swiftest locomotives at 70 mph over this 40-mile stretch of track. Engineers had been alerted to the racers presence on the salt and were encouraged to "let loose" if they encountered the autos, tempting the drivers into a wild automobile versus locomotive race. The trains, however, were no rivals for the speedy racers. Startled passengers, as they glanced out the windows, were surprised to encounter two racecars pacing lazily along side

the fast moving train. After waving to the occupants crowded to one side, the cars peeled away, turning a wide loop back in the opposite direction, then overtaking the train again, and passing it a second time. Again they looped and passed the train several more times, much to the delight of the waving passengers, until the train disappeared beyond the salt beds to the west. The drivers hid behind the earthen mounds and dikes laying in ambush for nearly every train that traversed the flats including the special private train of the vice president of the Denver & Rio-Grande Rail Road.

Salt Lake's most renowned motorcyclist, Lon Claflin and his friend and mechanic Albert Ward, were among those present for the expedition to the salt. Claflin was the Utah sales agent for Indian "motorcycles" and he brought along his showroom demonstrator to test on the salt. This standard Tourist model with a 2-speed gearbox was the top bike in the Indian line, and Claflin's bestseller. On its first run of the day, it posted a respectable 88 mph through the course. Al Ward was astride his personal machine; a powder gray Harley-Davidson Model 10, a lightweight but powerful roadster model. This motorcycle proved to be a handful, and difficult to control at high speed, giving Ward a very rough ride over the uneven, rippled salt and making a slower time.

Meanwhile, Teddy was determined to work the bugs out of the Benz. On his first run of the day, the gearshift linkage hung up. He and Basso spent the rest of the afternoon tinkering with it. A second run seemed to get better traction, but the shifting problem persisted — back to the pit area and another hour spent on adjustments. Finally, at sundown, Teddy gave it a third try. Flagmen at the ready, the car roared through the measured mile, seemingly a blur due to its high rate of speed. Teddy coasted back to the siding where he and Basso were told they had clicked off a half-mile in 13 1/5 seconds for a speed of 138 mph. The crew let out a cheer, but

Teddy knew he would have to do better than that to beat the current record of 141 mph. He and Basso decided they would make another run in the morning, after swapping the rear drive sprockets for a set of slightly larger ones, giving the drive chains a 1 to 1 ratio with the rear wheels. This, Basso was certain, would give the Benz enough power and speed to best the record.

On Wednesday, August 12, after early morning modifications, Tetzlaff and Basso hurled the Benz through the course at a speed exceeding 141 mph, then retired to have a well-earned breakfast. They were now confident beyond a doubt that the spectators who would be arriving aboard the special Rotary Club excursion train later that day, would see a new world record. But that record would be for the flying half mile. From the first day, observers and timers had noted the difficulty seeing the flagmen at either end of the mile course because of the mirage effect caused by the heated surface air. Flagmen were placed at the beginning and end of a half-mile stretch and the time doubled for speed through the mile.

At around one that afternoon, the Rotary Club excursion coaches squeaked to a stop on the siding and about 100 guests and notables spilled out onto the salt. The trip out from Salt Lake City had been thoroughly pleasant. The Western Pacific had provided two well-appointed Pullman cars, a baggage car and a lounge car in which the Rotary Club had offered a delicious buffet luncheon. Many of the spectators had never seen or visited the remote salt beds before. The afternoon took on the air of a summer garden party. Everywhere there were men with high button collars and straw summer boaters, and women with parasols, strolling about on the salt. Well-prepared spectators brought eyeglasses or goggles with dark tinted lenses.

Among the dignitaries present were Mayor Samuel Park of Salt Lake City, and Utah Governor William Spry. Both men had attended Saturday's races and were keenly interested in this venture, having been among the first to sign on for the excursion. A Pathe' motion picture cameraman unloaded all his gear and began scouting vantage points to film the speed assault. Also present was George L. Beam, official photographer of the Denver & Rio Grande, dispatched from Denver specifically to photograph the event for the railroad. Rishel and Moross had arrived as well, along with Frank Gardner and Charles Berry, the officially appointed timers. Just before leaving Salt Lake that day, Rishel had received a wire from the Chairman of the AAA Contest Board in New York City, reluctantly granting an official sanction for a half-mile record attempt. Rishel was surprised, then displeased and quickly wired back a renewed request for a mile sanction. He never got it, and at the late hour decided to accept the granted sanction.

At about 2:30, Moross megaphoned a welcome to the waiting crowd, and the official trials began. First Carlson and his mechanic climbed aboard his Maxwell and gave the crowd an impressive demonstration of how the speed trial would proceed. Rishel had encouraged everyone booked on the excursion to bring a stopwatch along to catch the times of the fastest cars. Many had followed his advice and when Carlson's car burned through the course, a chorus of clicking watches recorded his time. Times varied wildly among the crowd, but his official record for the run was a half-mile in 19 and two-fifths seconds or 94.73 mph. D'Alene sent his "Wasp" down the course and posted a time one-fifth of a second slower. One by one, each of the racing machines dashed through the course. Then the motorcycles tore up the salt with Claflin, crouched low in the saddle, squeezing 90 mph from his Indian, much to the delight of the cheering spectators.

With a confident wave to the excited crowd milling around the mighty Benz, Tezlaff signaled the tow car to take it out to the far end of the course. Anticipation ran high as everyone waited to hear the distant thundering from the racers exhaust, signaling the start of the record run. The Benz fired up roughly, and then smoothed out as the engine warmed up. Then silence. Soon the tow car pulled up hard at the siding with Basso behind the wheel. The Benz's fuel pipe had ruptured, the result of Monday's fire, and a repair would be done as quickly as possible. Gathering up his tool chest and several assistants, Basso quickly returned to the Benz, sitting silent, far out on the salt. Tense discussions broke out among the anxious spectators conjecturing about the repairs and the length of the delay. How much longer would they take? The heat was becoming almost unbearable. Luckily, one of the Moross Company's train-car-long canvas publicity banners had been stretched between two touring cars, providing some much appreciated shade. Thirty minutes had ticked by when the abrupt sound of a big engine took everyone by surprise. Someone perched atop a train car yelled, "Here she comes!"

Tetzlaff headed onto the course, quickly gaining speed as he changed from first gear, into second. With each change of gear, the engine seemed to run easier and with more power. As he pushed the lever forward hard into third, the Benz came alive as every nut, bolt and metal panel hummed and vibrated with energy. Mechanic Basso, furiously working the hand pumps to keep the tanks pressurized, dropped down onto the floorboards, below the cowl, to lessen wind resistance. Tetzlaff, his hands firmly gripping the big rattling steering wheel, was crouched as low and forward in the seat as safety would allow. At that moment, the front wheels and axel began to dance and "wave," momentarily startling him. For a split second, he considered backing off the throttle and aborting the attempt, the car dangerously close to being uncontrollable.

Instead, the nervy Californian decided to let her go and finish what he had started. A few hundred feet from the first flagman, Teddy dropped her into high gear, the engine screaming, and the throttle wide open. In the blink of an eye, the mighty racer hurled past the first flagman, and before anyone realized it, was past the second flagman and exiting the course. The car seemed to be flying effortlessly on the surface of the snow-white salt. No flying debris, no thick cloud of dust, no churning sand, only pure forward motion followed by the slightest spray of salt. A hundred stop-watches clicked, and then clicked again to record the astonishing time. Once again, the times among the crowd differed wildly. The official timers quickly huddled, and watches from both ends of the course were checked.

As Tetzlaff and Basso returned from the lower end of the course, Moross megaphoned the results to the waiting throng. Twelve and three-fifths seconds for the half-mile, or 25 and one-fifth seconds for the mile for a speed of 142.85 mph. By everyone's reckoning they had shaved one-fifth of a second off the record that had stood unchallenged for three years. A loud cheer and wild applause erupted from the gallery. Basso reached his arm around Teddy's neck as they sat in the Benz and gave him a stiff hug, bringing his head over and giving Tetzlaff a few affectionate bumps on the head with his own. Teddy Tetzlaff was now the new Speed King of the world. The boys had barely climbed out of the car before they were congratulated by the imposing figure of a be-goggled Governor Spry. He requested a fast tour of the course, and Teddy was happy to comply.

Soon joyously unrestrained speeding commenced as Tetzlaff, Carlson, and D'Alene whizzed back and forth through the course sometimes with passengers, sometimes without. Governor Spry was almost too portly to fit into Teddy's cramped Maxwell, but the two turned a 90 mph speed

through the mile on one pass. At one point a challenge was leveled for a match race from a standing start between Tetzlaff, Carlson, and D'Alene. Moross sent the trio off with the wave of a flag, and the cars disappeared out onto the salt, hot on each other's heels. They circled back around onto the course to the flag with a Maxwell, Marmon, Maxwell finish, Teddy winning the impromptu race.

Almost as swiftly as it had happened, the great speed meet at Salduro was coming to an end. As Tetzlaff and Moross toasted each other, the hired hands began loading the fleet of racecars into their rolling garage. Contracts had been signed and appearance money paid and it was time to head east, much to Teddy's frustration. He wanted at least one more day on the salt. He was convinced that with more time, he could shave seconds, not fractions of seconds, off the time he had made that day. He pointed out to the eager newsmen gathered around him that the Benz had been barnstorming all summer without a major mechanical overhaul, and was not even close to being in first-class shape. The previous record had been taken after three weeks of trials on the sand at Daytona. Teddy mused about the speeds he and a mechanic like Basso could get out of the Benz if he were able to spend three weeks on the salt with it. He was confident he could do better than 155 mph, a mile in twenty-three seconds, and would not be satisfied until he had the opportunity to try.

When reporters asked him about the Salduro course, he flatly pronounced it the greatest racecourse in the world, with almost limitless possibilities for speed. "If a meet is ever held here with electrical timing, every record now held will be shattered. A man," he continued, "doesn't know how fast he is going. On every other course in existence there is something to judge speed by — here there is absolutely none. When a man gets to tearing down a track with trees, fences and houses on both sides he will

cut her down when she gets up near the two-mile-a-minute mark, because he knows he is going at a dangerous rate of speed. Here there is nothing to tell him but the rush of the wind whether he is going 90 or 150 miles an hour. It's the psychology of the thing that will break the records."

"Though handicapped to a certain extent by the altitude," exclaimed Wilbur D'Alene, "the salt beds offer unexcelled opportunities for speed. I only hope that a regular course will be established and that I shall have the chance to make future trials here." Billy Carlson echoed his enthusiasm. Only Rudy Goetz had a complaint. "There is plenty of salt water in the Great Salt Lake, and a section of land between Salt Lake City and Saltair could be easily flooded with a foot or two of water and a three or four-mile speedway laid out that was closer to town."

Promoter Moross was well pleased by the day's outcome. Any costs he had incurred over the prior three days would be more than offset by the revenue potential of a dazzling new speed record. "It has been a revelation to me and I think, to the majority of the people of Utah," Moross commented. "If we have made friends of the residents of Salt Lake and Utah I am more than repaid. The salt beds are one of the natural wonders of the world, and, so far as I can learn, practically unknown, even in Utah. I hope that today's meet will give them a little of the publicity they deserve and finally result in the establishment of the greatest racing course the world has ever known." He intimated that he would stop in Salt Lake City on his way to the West Coast, after the racing season had ended, to begin laying the groundwork for a huge speed meet to be held at Salduro the following summer.

By sunset, the cars had been secured and the railcars attached to the excursion train bound for Salt Lake then east to Chicago. It was all

smiles and congratulations for Rishel and his supporters at the Auto and Rotary Clubs. The speed trials had been a rousing success. His idea for a saline speedway on the western salt beds had not only proven workable, it had been endorsed by some of auto racing's biggest stars. Straightway, Rishel met with Governor Spry and his advisors to solidify plans to bring Moross and a bigger contingent of speed cars and famous drivers to race the flats the following summer.

Just one day after the conclusion of the speed trials, the *Deseret News* set out to put a damper on all the backslapping. It correctly reminded its readership that the AAA had granted a sanction for a half-mile record attempt only, the first time it had ever done so. The paper lauded Tetzlaff's bravado as a driver and congratulated him for doing the fastest half-mile ever in an automobile, but it ridiculed Rishel's assertion that the mile-record had also fallen, calling the claim completely erroneous. Simply doubling the half-mile time and calling it a mile, when a mile had not been timed, was fraudulent. The only speed record for the flying mile that could be legitimately recognized belonged to Bob Burman. Then the narrative subtly implied that Tetzlaff hadn't actually covered the measured mile at full speed, but backed off and coasted through the end of the course. The story cast a cloud of doubt over the whole event.

Rishel, himself, didn't help the situation. He continued to loudly trumpet that the record for the flying mile had been soundly and officially broken. He again wired the New York critics and urgently petitioned them to revisit his original request and recognize both the half-mile and mile records. The powerful, but often-capricious Contest Board of the AAA would have none of it. It responded by stonewalling Rishel, then rescinding its sanction for the half-mile record altogether, citing irregularities, including the violation of its statutes governing the use of stopwatches to

time an event. Rules allowed watches to be used for events longer than 10 miles in length and more than an hour in duration. All else required the use of an approved electric timing device. Adding insult to injury, and angering Rishel, the New York critics also noted the absence of an official observer from the Contest Board. Infuriated, Rishel washed his hands of the AAA and appealed to the rival Automobile Club of America to recognize the time. That organization also rejected his petition. The times would be considered invalid and unofficial.

The great Salduro speed meet became something of a red-faced embarrassment to Rishel and his gang of Salt Lake boosters. Hasty planning, poor communication with the AAA, and suspect timing had proved their undoing. The goal of promoting a new road across the desert and highlighting an amazing natural auto racecourse had backfired. With no spectacular new speed record in his pocket to bolster ticket sales, and the whole affair being ridiculed in the press, Moross quietly distanced himself and his organization from the event. If he were to return to Utah's salt beds and mount another record attempt the following year, it would require substantial official as well as financial guarantees. When his proposal, with its steep price tag, landed before Governor Spry later that fall, any plans for future speed carnivals were tabled indefinitely.

Memories of the Salduro speed trial soon slipped into the mists of auto racing oblivion. It would be nearly 20 years before another purpose-built speed car of any kind would again roll across the salt flats of Utah in pursuit of a recognized speed mark.