

Editor's Note:

Since working on an alternate energy science fair project as a child, Smokey Yunick has been a growing part of my consciousness. It seemed every Popular Science I reviewed showed his inventive efforts. As a teenager interested in automobiles, accounts of his racing achievements further inspired and encouraged my interest in why machines work, and how they might be made to work better. As a Ph.D. candidate studying the history of racing technology I was finally able to meet Smokey. Family and fate arranged and interview wherein he entertained me with tales of how an innovator works and thinks. From that meeting, our friendship and my part in this project grew. I learned much about the antics, experiments and achievements that comprise his career. Getting to know more about Smokey's work and thought, and getting to know Smokey and his family has been a tremendous joy. It is out of respect and admiration for all these players that I write this note.

I helped Smokey work his autobiography into the volume you now hold. So that there is no misunderstanding, I want to be perfectly clear about who wrote this book. Except for this note and the introductions

for each section, every written part of this book came entirely from Smokey Yunick. When I first saw the book, it was a collection of transcripts rendered by his wife Margie and daughter Trish. During the editing process, in constant interaction with Smokey, I worked only to organize Smokey's words into more easily digested paragraphs, chapters, and volumes. In cooperation with Smokey I also attempted to weed out repeated accounts, resolve unclear passages, and track down needlessly misspelled words. In short, there has been no ghostwriter here.

Despite being the product of a smart and fascinating person, I doubt that you will agree with or enjoy everything you read in this account. Smokey wrote the events of his life, not to spark controversy, irritate or entertain. Rather, this book is Smokey sharing his experiences and observations so that, you the reader, might think and learn. He is letting the world in on the honest details of the project of his life. For that reason his failures are more accessible – more human, his successes all the more fantastic.

The intention of this book is not to be conventional. Like a life conducted with utter disregard for conventions, this book is intended to, above all, be real. It is an account of how things were relayed by someone who has been there and done that. It takes fantastic bravery to invite disagreement by writing what you think is true and relaying your memories no matter how ugly. If not polished by some standards – I believe it has a patina that reflects the attitude and philosophy of its author. Like any life well lived, this book is not always pretty, funny, sad, special, or tidy. But it does reflect the poise, creativity, perspective and determination, of an interesting man in amazing circumstances.

Thanks Smokey,

Ben Shackleford

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