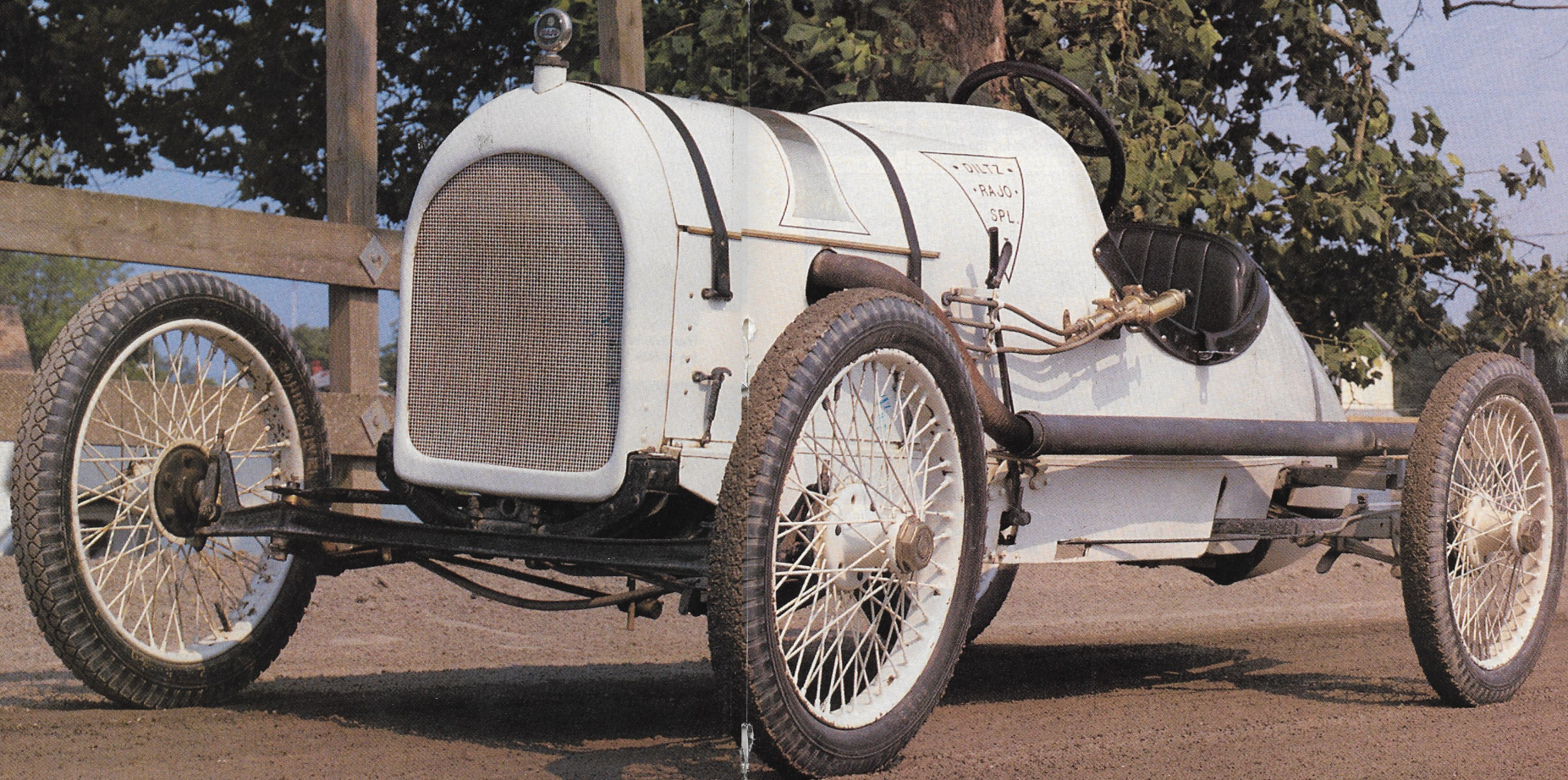


# A Snap-Dash "T"



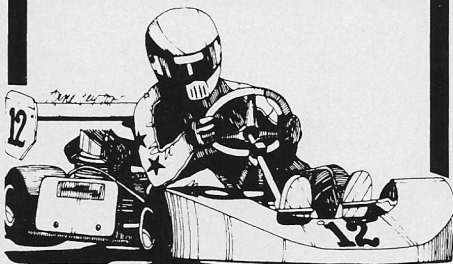
*Henry Ford's ubiquitous Model T  
launched scores of racing careers.*

COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY: THOMAS GLATCH



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## A SNAP-DASH "T"

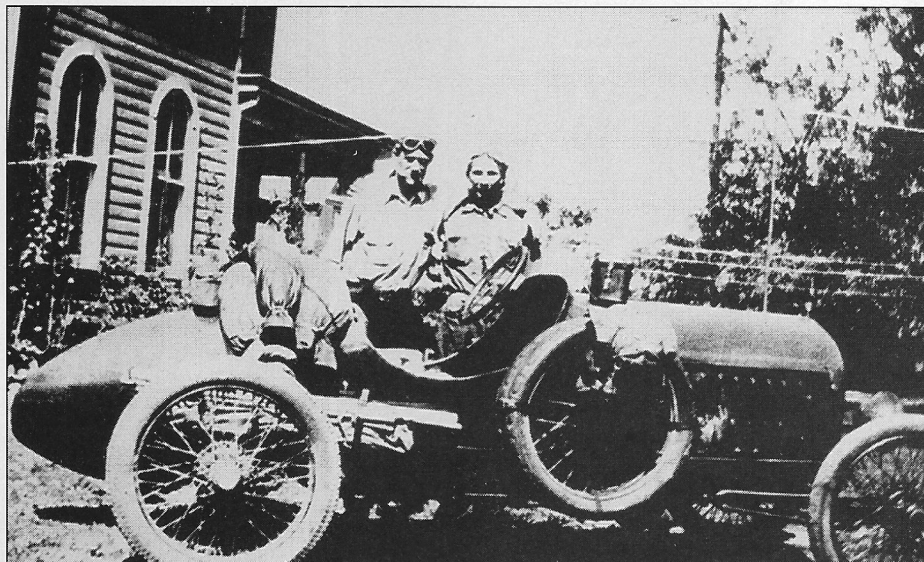
By **THOMAS GLATCH**

**I**T WAS CALLED THE "UNIVERSAL CAR," and it certainly was. Henry Ford's Model T was the first automobile for the masses, and the Tin Lizzie was used in just about every application imaginable. The factory offered the "T" in roadster, coupe, sedan, and touring configurations—even in a 1-ton truck. Outside suppliers offered these flivvers converted into fire engines, ambulances, hearses, snowmobiles, and dozens of other applications. Like the Volkswagen Beetle of more recent times, the Model T was simple, basic transportation.

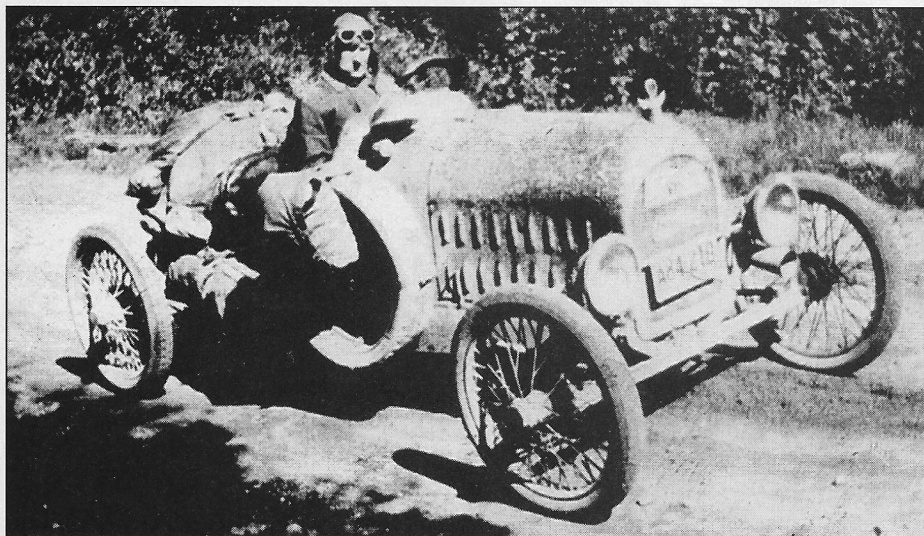
But despite its humble, plain-Jane ap-

pearance, the Model T even served admirably as the first race car of a whole generation of daredevils. There were over 17 million built between 1907 and 1927 and it was a natural as a racing machine. Model T's were cheap and plentiful. The original price was \$500 (it dropped to \$265 by 1923), but worn and abused Tin Lizzies were very inexpensive on the used-car market. With a little work and a little money, Ford's basic-black automobile could be transformed into a sleek, sporty speedster.

The legendary Ted Horn spent his 15th summer picking peaches to earn enough money for his first "T" racer. Art Sparks, the brilliant racing designer,

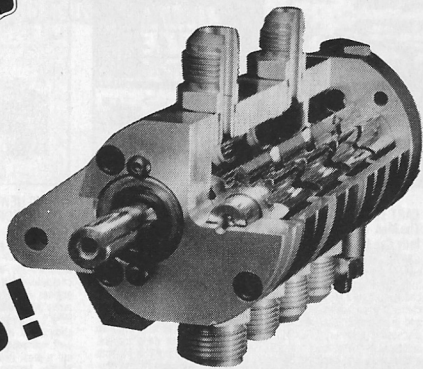


*Wilbert Agnew and his uncle pose with his speedster before their hunting expedition to Canada in the late Twenties. Behind is the Agnew home in Alliance, Ohio. (Garth Diltz Collection photo)*



*Wilbert Agnew's speedster on its Canadian journey. With no trunk and a small, narrow cockpit, the adventurers had to strap their equipment to the body. (Garth Diltz Collection photo)*

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## A SNAP-DASH "T"

paid \$100 for a confiscated bootlegger's Model T to build his first dirt track car. Three-time Indianapolis 500 winner Wilbur Shaw also built his first race car out of a junked Model T, as did Mauri Rose, Frank Lockhart, and many other racing heroes. So did countless lesser-known thrill-seekers.

Wilbert Agnew, of Alliance, Ohio, was one of those local racers. It was in 1919 that he built a speedster with the Indianapolis 500 in mind. His speedster's story, this month's CIRCLE TRACK Classic, is typical of most.

The first modifications most racers made to their Model T's were in the engine compartment. A stock Model T was powered by an easy-living 176-cubic-inch four-cylinder flat-head powerplant. With only 20 horsepower on tap, performance was hardly exciting. But power could be increased dramatically by installing an aftermarket overhead-valve cylinder head conversion for around \$60. A young racer could choose from among a number of manufacturers, such as Roof-Laurel, Waukesha-Ricardo, Craig-Hunt, and Morton & Brett. So popular were these conversions that Louis and Gaston Chevrolet's Frontenac company produced 60 heads a day at its peak.

Wilbert Agnew equipped his speedster with the popular Rajo model-SR cylinder head, an overhead-valve conversion manufactured in Racine, Wisconsin, by ex-racer Joe Jagersberger. Other modifications included an ignition system supplied by American Bosch Magneto Corp. of Springfield, Massachusetts, which was a vast improvement over the stock "spark box" design. So was the Rayfield updraft carburetor mounted on the Rajo manifold. And a Tri-Unit water pump replaced the original "thermosyphon" cooling system. His engine now produced a good 30 horsepower or more; enough to propel a lightweight speedster at a pretty good clip.

Suspension modifications often came next. The Model T stood high on its spindly wheels, a necessity to traverse rutted, muddy dirt roads. But a racer needed a lower machine for better handling. A set of \$10 lowering blocks like the bronze Laurel blocks Agnew installed on his speedster not only lowered the car but stretched the wheelbase 3 inches (to 103 inches). He also replaced the stock wood-spoked wheels with a set of stronger, lighter PASCO wire wheels.

What really made speedsters special were their sporty custom bodies. Many racers just removed the stock body from the firewall rearward and mounted a set of seats on the floorboards. Some built their own body shells out of sheetmetal or fabric mounted on a wood framework. A number of manufacturers offered speedster bodies, many costing less than \$100 painted and ready to install.



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One advertising copywriter warned, however, that these bodies were "primarily for red-blooded men who want style, dash, and snap!" Desiring the maximum in style, dash, and snap, Agnew installed the \$150 "Raceway" body built by Morton & Brett of Indianapolis. Morton & Brett's advertising claimed, "When You See a Race, You See Our Bodies," and they were often the choice of racers—and the envy of Ford owners everywhere.

Now that Agnew had the ultimate Model T Ford, he took his creation to compete in the 1919 Indianapolis 500. Unfortunately, the engine threw a connecting rod in practice so he was never officially entered in the race.

If racing a Model T at Indy seems like an unlikely proposition, check the results of the 1923 Indy 500. An Indianapolis Ford dealer, Barber-Warnock, entered a specially built single-seat machine constructed by Morton & Brett based on Model T components. A unique race-legal 122-cubic-inch Ford engine was created by Frontenac, utilizing its double-overhead-cam 16-valve cylinder head conversion. The whole project received the blessing of Ford Motor Company. Veteran L. L. "Slim" Corum started the orange Barber-Warnock Special in seventh, 22 MPH off Tommy Milton's 108.17-MPH pole-winning speed. Still, Corum raced steadily to an incredible fifth in the 500-mile ordeal, finishing on the lead lap with winner Tommy Milton.

Agnew never returned to the Brickyard, but he did race throughout the Ohio-Pennsylvania area for a number of years. Like most speedsters, however, his car also served double duty as daily transportation. With the standard Model T headlights, taillight, and horn mounted, his car was now street legal, and, with a top speed of 83 MPH, it was the fastest car for miles around. Agnew's speedster was even used on a hunting trip to Canada in the late Twenties. It must have been quite an adventure, since his car had neither windshield nor top!

Eventually, Agnew parked his speedster for good. It went through a succession of owners over the years, just gathering dust. In 1977 Garth Diltz of Kent, Ohio, rescued the speedster from its plight and restored it to its former glory. It now competes at many "old-timer" shows throughout the country as the oldest active race car in America. And while a number of speedsters have been built on Model T chassis in recent years, Diltz's car is most likely the only *authentic* and original Ford speedster in existence.

Henry Ford designed the Model T to be the "Universal Car." But we wonder if he ever thought his homely Tin Lizzie would appeal to "red-blooded men who want style, dash, and snap"? 



## NEW INVENTION ALLOWS USE OF BIGGER CARBURETORS THAN EVER BEFORE. SPECTACULAR THROTTLE RESPONSE AND DRIVE- ABILITY.

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*For Example:* Small block racing engines in the 355 to 430 cubic inch displacement range used for Circle Track Racing would show 20 to 30 more horsepower on the Dyno using a 850 CFM carburetor over a 750 CFM. However, a 750 carburetor with better throttle response off the corner and on restarts, would turn faster lap times on the track.

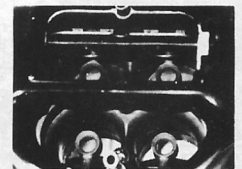
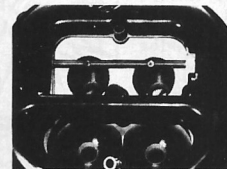
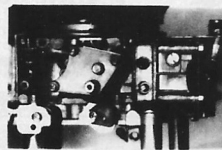
*The Solution Is: The Tri Plex Series.* The Tri Plex in our example has, for the first 1/3 throttle opening. Air flow and fuel flow similar to a 650 CFM carburetor. 1/3 to 2/3 throttle simulates a 750 CFM and 2/3 to full throttle a 850 CFM. Thus gaining not only the 20 to 30 top end horsepower the high flow 850 provides also improving low end response similar to a 650 CFM carburetor.

*These Results Are:* As Dr. Ed King said after trying the prototype Tri Plex on his 394 cubic inch late model "absolutely incredible." We at C & S think this may be the most exciting product since we developed and introduced the first successful alcohol carburetor in 1979.

Tri Plex development was made possible by our "One of a Kind" flow bench/simulator. Originally designed and built by Carter Carburetor Co. C & S Specialties has added instrumentation from McDonnell Douglas Aerospace, Brooks Instruments and Meriam Instruments. Resulting in enlarged air flow and fuel flow capacity to 2400 horsepower and 1/4 of 1% accuracy. This facility is now valued at over \$100,000.

We are in the process of patenting the Tri Plex Concept. Carburetors will be formally introduced and on display at the Daytona Speed Week Circle Track Trade Show. Booth #67.

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