

# STILL CRAZY AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

## Wild Bill Devine Is Still Running Strong

By Rod Short

Ever sit around with your buddies talking about the racers you saw from days gone by? There were guys like Don Walsh, Sr., Steve Grebeck, Racin' Jason, Gene Deputy, Stormin' Norman, and a whole lot more. It was a crazy time and there was a lot of fun for everyone, but it may not be as far in the past as you might think. One of the guys who has first-hand knowledge of what it was like back then is NHRA Diablo Pro 5.0 racer Bill Devine.

"I've been drag racing since I was 18, and I'm 46 now, so I've got some great stories and memories," Bill said with a smile. "In 1989, I got my Mustang, and by 1990 to 91, I was in Mustang showdowns. I started with a Paxton, went to nitrous, ran a Vortech, and then went Turbo years ago. I was there for the first Car Craft Buick vs. Mustang showdowns. I hung around with everybody who was in the sport and saw it evolve from there."

A lot of people picked up nicknames back then, much like in the days of the early West. During the very earliest days of the Internet, people still depended on magazines and word-of-mouth to learn about all the goings-on in the sport. With piercing blue eyes that could stop you in your tracks and a killer streetcar, it didn't take long before Bill became "Wild Bill" Devine. It all just added to the legend and lore of the sport. "I remember running Lawrence Conley at one of the very first Buick vs. Mustang events," Bill recalled when asked about the early days, "and then the first time I got a shirt from Gene Deputy. Then there was a time that Racin' Jason and I with loaded up water balloons and went looking for J.R. Granatelli. We used to terrorize everybody in the pits. I still remember Mike Ragusa driving my car and us picking on Job Spettor, Sr. in a restaurant full of racers. There was never a dull moment. The antics never



stopped. I remember those times and then realize that none of those guys are left. Those are things that stick out in my mind."

While waxing nostalgic may seem like something you'd expect from a retired guy, Bill is hardly sitting still. He finished "Fourth" in points despite running a limited schedule and picked up victories at Columbus and Maple Grove over guys like Vic Williams and eventual champion Don Walsh, Jr. It would be only

one of two times that Walsh would lose all year in 2004.

"For a while it looked like whether Pro 5.0 would survive looked kind of sketchy," Bill said when looking back over the past five years. "People used to do this out of their own backyard garage, but it got to be very, very expensive. I think the class also lost some of its appeal. You can't equate these cars to Pro Stock," he continued. "It's more like Pro-Modified-and they're overpowered for what they are. We need to run more NHRA-caliber tracks so the fans will have more side-by-side racing, but we called everybody and did a lot talking back and forth. I think things have definitely improved this year and we have rules that we can live with."

Bill is racing this year with a Mark Wilkerson-built car that used a true 302 block that was built by Ronnie Crawford. The engine is topped with Yates heads and a Precision 94mm turbo with an Acel/DFI Gen VI engine management box. Getting an 8.2-inch-deck-height block to run 200 mph at Reynolds in early 2005 was a milestone and a testament to how hard Bill works with what he has.

"As for us, I think we have a good chance to be very competitive," Bill said when asked about his own race program this year. "The races thus far have been the best sessions for us. You can't get time off and go test if you're a working guy, but I've learned quite a

bit and I think we can get the car dialed in. I have high hopes. I'd liked to go after the point's lead, but it's going to be tough with Hauf and Walsh in there. They have more a handle on how to race this stuff than 10 of us put together."

Even with his job as a sales consultant at Pro Power in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, Bill and his crew-chief-wife Cheryl look to make as many events as they can in 2005. "I love cars and go watch. I'm not afraid to walk up to a competitor and just admire their car. I think it was close to being." It's been a long and crazy career, but for this husband and wife team, the final chapter has yet to be written. **SDR**

