

1965 WATSON HISTORY

The following is the history of the #4 car from 1964 to present.

Bob Wilke, racecar owner, at the start of the build season for the 1965 U.S.A.C. Championship races ask racecar builder A.J. Watson to create two new cars for his company "Leader Card." Roger Ward, after his Second place finish at the 1964 Indy 500, would drive one car. Don Branson, Champion U.S.A.C. driver for many years would drive the other car. The two new cars were built at A.J.'s California shop. Rogers ride was to be the #2 sponsored by "M00G" and Dons ride would be the #4 sponsored by "Wynn's" with Jud Philips as chief mechanic.

1965

At the end of the 1965 U.S.A.C. Season, Bob Wilke sold the #4 car plus parts to Indianapolis machinist and racecar owner Walt Flynn. Walt fitted the car with an Offy engine, hired Sprint car driver Ralph Liguori and entered to race at the 1966 "Indy 500" as the #35. Ralph failed to qualify. Walt entered the #35 at Indy in 1967 fitted with a 4 Cam Ford V8 with Ralph at the wheel. On his qualifying lap Ralph lost control of the car and hit the outside wall nose first. The car did not make the race and Ralph broke his wrist.

1968

Walt Flynn sold the #35 car to three men from Minnesota. Pat O'Reilly, (sprint car driver and bartender), John Gavan, (Professor at Wisconsin State University) and Mike DeMulling, (Owner of a sheet metal shop.) In 1969 the three entered to race at Indy. The car went as the #51, "Minnesota Serendipity." Dee Jones was hired as driver. #51 only made it through testing but did not qualify. In 1971 the three were back at Indy with the serendipity and Dee Jones. Dee crashed in practice and they never made the race. This was the last run at Indy. Pat, Dee and the #51 did run many U.S.A.C. Races in 68, 69, 70, 71 as well as a two-day race in Argentina.

1972

Pat O'Reilly, owner of the #51, teamed up with Ted Blair from North Hampton, Massachusetts. Ted had developed a 6 cylinder, two stroke, twin turbo charged engine, of his own design. They stretched the wheel base six inches, redesigned the nose and cowl, added fins up front and a large wing in back.

Pat claims that the car was very fast. So fast that U.S.A.C. would not let it run. The #51 did race, but only after removing the six cylinder engine and installing a four cam Ford. Dee drove well but no wins.

1973

Pat sold the Serendipity to Ted Blair for \$2000.00

1974 – 1976

Ted Blair kept the #51 Minnesota Serendipity until 1976 when it was passed on to his sons. The Blair's were racers in the New Hampton, Massachusetts area. At the end of the 1977 race season, like so many small tracks, there was a parts swap meet. The boy's towed the old #51 to the show to sell, where they were spotted by another racer, Don Danville from Storrs Mansfield, CT. Don had a big block modified for sale, just what the Blair's wanted to buy. They made a trade. Don took the #51 home and put it in the loft of his barn and there it sat for 13 years. In 1990, Walter Turell from North Easton, Mass. bought Serendipity for \$7000.00. In 1991 Walter sold the #51 to Harry Woodward from Camilla, Ga. Harry tracked down Pat O'Reilly and bought Pat's last fresh 4 cam engine

1992

Harry Woodward, Camilla, GA., sold the old Watson car to Thomas W. Acker from Dunnellon, FL. Tom shortened the wheel base 6", back to original, fabricated a new motor plate, installed O'Reilly's fresh 4 cam engine, cleaned the car up and put it in his collection. The car stayed, surviving a tornado at Tom's shop that destroyed everything around it. Tom sold the stored car to William (Bill) Davis from Ortonville, MI. in 2000. Bill is restoring the car back to its 1965 appearance when Don Branson qualified 18th and finished 8th.

Thanks to:

Bob Wilke, Willie Davis, A. J. Watson, Roger Beck, Larry Shinoda, Jud Philips, Leroy Payne , and the 65 Team.