



## **LEGENDS OF THUNDER VALLEY**

### **WALLY PARKS**

Without the vision and foresight of Wally Parks, the exciting and colorful world of National Hot Rod Association drag racing may have been only a dream, resting in the minds of thousands of racers longing to prove the performance of their hot rods.

In 1951, Parks took that dream and made it a reality. When he formed NHRA, Parks could only imagine what the future would hold for the young sport. NHRA has been racing forward ever since and is one of the most popular motorsport sanctioning bodies in the world.

In 1937, Parks helped form the Southern California Timing Association; a car club focused on conducting land speed record events. He also was elected as one of its officials, a position he held until he left to serve his country in World War II.

Upon his return, Parks held many positions, including a stint as the first editor of *Hot Rod* magazine. He utilized the magazine's popularity and nationwide influence to increase interest in a national drag racing association. NHRA was formed under Parks' leadership in 1951. The new organization quickly gained support from racers. By 1963, Parks resigned his position as editorial director for Petersen automotive magazines to serve as president for the thriving organization.

Parks was quick to note that he was not the lone person behind NHRA's foundation, growth and success. Many people shared his belief that anything is possible when you believe. Parks, however, provided the leadership to bring these people together.

Parks earned numerous awards for his contributions to the world of auto racing. In 1992, he became the first drag racing inductee into the International Motorsports Hall of Fame. The next year, he was inducted into the Motorsports Hall of Fame in Novi, Mich. At the 2001 NHRA Awards Ceremony, Parks received the Blaine Johnson award for his dedication, perseverance, and

commitment to the sport. The Motor Press Guild named him the Dean Batchelor Lifetime Achievement Award winner in 2003.

Parks remains on the NHRA Board of Directors and contributes most of his time to the growth and development of The Wally Parks NHRA Motorsports Museum. The museum's focus is on the history and evolution of NHRA and drag racing.

With 80,000 current members and 35,000 licensed competitors, NHRA has given many dreamers the opportunity to put the pedal down and race. Wally Parks helped the dream come true for many, including himself.

For his involvement in the foundation of NHRA, Bristol Dragway honored Wally Parks as a Legend of Thunder Valley during the July 2007 NHRA Thunder Valley Nationals. Parks passed away in September of the same year. He was 94.