



LEGENDS OF THUNDER VALLEY SHIRL GREER

Perhaps, Shirl Greer is best known as the winner of the first NHRA Funny Car World Championship in 1974. But for local drag racing historians, Greer may be remembered for the ways in which his career intertwined with the history of Bristol Dragway

When Larry Carrier and Carl Moore finished construction on legendary Thunder Valley, it was Greer who made the first pass down the track. From that moment on, Greer was a force to be reckoned with during weekly events in Bristol.

His crowning moment came during the 1974 NHRA season. Prior to 1974, NHRA champions were crowned during a single race. The 1974 season was the first to use a yearlong points chase, with drivers collecting points at each race attended.

Heading into the World Finals in Ontario, Calif., the last race of the season, Greer held a slim points lead over his rival, Don "The Snake" Prudhomme. During a qualifying run for the event, a catastrophic engine explosion destroyed the body of his Chained Lightning Mustang. While Greer was treated at the hospital, his crew, friends and members of other race teams worked to rebuild Chained Lightning. Several drivers loaned safety equipment to replace what Greer had lost during the fire.

Although he had suffered minor injuries, Greer was able to climb into the saddle once more during final eliminations. He was able to claim the win in the first round and, coupled with Prudhomme's loss in the second round, the 1974 World Championship. During his career, he had one NHRA national event victory, the 1974 Le Grandnational Molson in Montreal. He also finished second in points to Prudhomme in 1976, a year that saw Prudhomme win seven out of 8 races.

In IHRA competition, Greer collected two national event victories, both here in Bristol. He won the All-American Nationals, back-to-back in 1974 and 1975.

Greer was a perennial NHRA Division Two contender and won the division F/C title in 1974, 76, 77 and 78. Greer also earned several national event titles in AHRA competition.

Greer raced Funny Cars through the 1980s and competed weekly at Bristol Dragway for many years.

Greer passed away after complications from surgery on March 12, 2010. He was 75.

For his devotion to his home track, Bristol Dragway, track officials honor Shirl Greer as a Legend of Thunder Valley during the 2010 NHRA Thunder Valley Nationals.

His sons, Rusty, Van and Brian, accepted the award on his behalf.