



## **Best Damn Garage in Town...The World According to Smokey**

**By Henry "Smokey" Yunick**

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### **Synopsis**

Smokey got the idea for writing a history of stock car racing after giving a talk to explain racing to a group of kids at Lowe's Motorspeedway, around 1995. He realized that all the people who were a part of the early days were dying and most of the ones who were still alive were too involved with racing to be able to tell the real stories. He started writing this book as a history of stock car racing and ended up with look at American history of the past 60 years through a very unique set of eyes.

The first volume, *Walkin' Under a Snake's Belly*, covers Smokey's life outside racing, beginning with growing up in Neshaminy, Pennsylvania on a farm, dropping out of high school to take care of the family and going off to World War II as a B-17 pilot. The war stories are told through the eyes of a young man who believed all that the Army Air Corps taught him, but he had a mind of his own and was also hell-bent on having fun at all costs. If that meant irritating a few generals, then that was just par for the course.

After the racing years, Smokey ended spending most of his time working on his inventions and working in the oil and gold fields of Ecuador. Along the way, Smokey had a knack for finding fun and adventure everywhere he went. Alcohol, women and speed were his main addictions - he eventually gave up alcohol, but never did give up the other two.

The second volume, *All Right You Sons-a-Bitches, Let's Have a Race*, chronicles the stock car racing years in living color. The warning on these books, that they are not to be read by those under 18 unless they are with a grandparent who can translate the social and moral implications of the stories, is not to be taken lightly. (Smokey even includes his own dictionary to explain the terms that racers

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used in the early days to the uninformed.) Smokey and his band of merry compatriots were racers and there were only two things on their mind when the sun went down – women and booze. Smokey had his share of both during 15 years of racing, when racers were looked down on as the dregs of society. Nothing could stop his dream of being the fastest at the sport he loved, no matter what happened along the way – the sign of a true racer.

During his years in stock car racing, Smokey fell in love with a mistress that he would visit every May for over 20 years – The Indianapolis 500. The first half of the third volume, *Li'l Skinny Rule Book*, covers his love of this famed event and the wonderful stories of the days before the big corporate sponsors; when it was just men and their machines, sleeping on the floor in the garage and most times coming home with nothing. As the title implies, Smokey loved Indy because the rules were so simple. His inventive mind and knack for thinking way outside the box were at their best when Indy was involved.

The second half of the third volume, *Eatin' an Elephant*, covers his years of inventing inside and outside of racing. Smokey's 10 patents don't begin to cover the breadth and depth of his inventing. His work with the car companies and on the race track led to a host of developments that have improved surface transportation for everyone. The value of some, like his famous hot vapor engine, were never fully realized.

Many books have been written about the last 50 years of American history, but few are this entertaining, revealing and introspective all at the same time. Real stories from World War II, stock cars, the automotive industry and the Mexican Road Race are just a few of the elements in Smokey's autobiography. They combine to make *Best Damn Garage in Town... The World According to Smokey* one of the most interesting books in a long time.

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