

Al Fiedler

Al Fiedler was a genuine pioneer in short track stock car racing. He built his first stock car in 1950, a 1937 Ford tudor sedan, Powered by the mighty Ford flathead V-8 engine. The Ford flathead engine was Fiedler's forte, and in addition to building his own engines, he built another 150-200 of the V-8's in the 1950s and early 1960s for other stock car racers. His first driver was Hall-of-Famer Marshall Gardner, and the team made their debut at Pipstone, Minnesota in the spring of 1950. That first trip was a Memorable one. We drove the race car to the track. Al was driving down highway 77 and I was sitting beside him," Gardner said years later." The car didn't have a windshield and we pulled up behind a cattle truck and one of the cows decided it was time to relieve herself. It started out as kind of a spray, but before long it was a gusher and it all came through the opening where the windshield used to be. By the time we got to the racetrack, we were both soaked and everybody at Pipstone that day kind of stayed upwind from us. "The original sedan had a short life after Gardner crashed, destroying anything salvagable. Fiedler then started building Ford Coupes, and before he blew out his welding torch in the mid 1970s, he constructed 38 of the cars. "We used to run at Pipstone on Sunday afternoons and then hook a tow bar to the car and drive like hell to make it down to Sioux City for Sunday night," Fiedler said. "They had a little quarter mile dirt track at the Riverside Amusement Park and they would only let the first 100 cars in the pits. We made 4 trips down there before we finally got there early enough to get in the pits. The first night we got there late they told us we were the 161st car to get in line. That's how I took the number 161 for my first few racecars. Fiedler and Gardner raced at Pipstone, Sioux City, Parker, Casey's Speedway in Yankton, Tripp, Kimball, Spencer and Milford and any number of unremembered long gone ovals. Gardner decided he wanted to build his own racecars and cordially parted ways with Fiedler. The two remained close friends and fellow competitors until Fiedler's death. Fiedler then employed a long list of drivers to manhandle his Ford Coupes that included Buster Moeller, Jack Peterson, Francis 'Pancake' Mach, Jerry Ross, Ed Arends, Marty Jacobs, Howard Allen, Loren Tschetter, Dave Engebretson, and Ron Wagameesteer. When Huset's Speedway opened on May 23, 1954, Fiedler had a Ford Coupe with Moeller at the wheel. Also in 1954, Fiedler decided to give driving a try and wheeled one of his Ford Coupes to three Feature wins at Huset's and one at old Soo Speedway. A serious crash in Jackson, Minnesota in 1958 ended his driving career and he returned to his first love of building and tweaking his beloved Ford Coupes. He built his last racecar in the late 1970s, a six-cylinder modified for Jacobs, and served as an official at Huset's until 1988. In addition to building 38 cars of his own, He's estimated that he helped build another 80 in his tenure as a craftsman car and engine builder.