

Kansan, Grady Wade

By Ray Cunningham

Grady Wade raced for three decades running Jalopies, modifieds, Super Modifieds and Sprint Cars.

Grady started his career in 1957 when he and a friend built a Jalopy to race in Wichita Kansas his home town. The next year Wichita neighbor Laverne Nance built a car and asked Grady to drive it for him. After several years of developing his craft 1963 was his first big year. Grady finished 2nd place at 81 Speedway in Wichita for the track championship, narrowly losing to veteran Forest Coleman. He set quick time at the Hutchinson Nationals, the top modified race of the era. In the 50 lap event he led the first 20 laps before a gear box broke. In 1964 Grady got a big Super Modified win at the Jayhawk Nationals in Topeka.



Owner Pius Selenke and Grady Wade 1964
BCRA Champs

In 1965 racing Sprint Cars full time Grady won the BCRA Championship for owner Pius Selenke. Wade won the championship over a nine race schedule that proved to be one of



Wade in the famed Chet Wilson, "Offy Killer"

the most competitive in BCRA history, edging out veteran Jack Hahn in the final standings. Wade's signature win came at the Belleville Highbanks during fair week. Grady also won a 50 lap Super Sprint race at 81 that year.

In 1965 Wade moved to the Chet Wilson 25. Wilson after a long successful run with drivers such as Harold Leep, Gordon Wooley and Walt McWhorter took on the young charger. Wade and Wilson

proved to be a good match as they won IMCA races at Granite City Illinois and Des Moines Iowa. Wade finished 9th place in the standings giving him "Rookie of the Year" honors.

In BCRA action, Wade also finished 9th place in points.

The 1967 season was not as successful, crashes at Tampa Florida and El Centro, California set the team back. Grady did finish second twice on the IMCA

circuit, and brought home a third place finish in BCRA action at Belleville driving for Bill Smith.

1968 was a great year for the 25 team. Only racing in 11 IMCA races Grady won 4 times and finished second another time. Wade took victories at Sedalia



Missouri, Des Moines, Iowa and Topeka Kansas twice, and lost another by 2 feet to Jerry Blundy at Des Moines.



Grady Wade in Speedy's 4X at Belleville.1967

Except for a rare appearance this would be the last season either Wade or Wilson competed in Sprint Cars on a regular basis.

In 1969 Wade moved backed to the 100 inch Super Modified ranks.His biggest victory that season was in the Enid Winter Nationals. Grady won six Super Modified races in 1970 for car owner Pat Suchy at Enid Speedway in Oklahoma.

In 1971 a new organization for 100 inch Super Modified cars was formed (NCRA) sanctioning 50 lap races in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Louisiana. Grady finished 3rd in points, winning at Oklahoma City and finishing second at Hutch and Muskogee Oklahoma.

One last time veterans Grady Wade and Chet Wilson teamed together in 1972. With a car built in 1957 Grady finished in the top five the first day and beat a stellar field the second at the IMCA fair races in Oklahoma City. It was the last Sprint Car victory for both driver and car owner. Also in 1972 Grady teamed with Wilson's son Jerry in the Super Modified ranks, finishing second to Dale Reed for the track championship.

In 1973 Grady teamed up with Laverne Nance to go sprint car racing. At

Wakeeney Kansas the duo took second to Thad Doshier in BCRA action. Grady finished 9th at Belleville in his last BCRA go.

1974 was great year for Grady in the super modified ranks. Teamed up with 1971 owner John Schippert once again, Grady won the 50 lap NCRA race at Wichita. He also won six races on the Merrick circuit, including 4 in a row at Dodge City.

In 1975 Grady started off the year winning back to back super modified features at Dodge City. In July Grady retired and dedicated more time to business concerns in Kansas.



Selenke team in Winners circle 1965

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