

Dan Gurney

1931 -

In the highly specialized world of motor sports, there are drivers, there are engineers, there are builders, and there are team owners. In Dan Gurney's world, he has successfully navigated every discipline of motor racing, and to this day remains the only American to win a Formula One Grand Prix driving a car of his own construction.

Daniel Sexton Gurney was born in 1931, on Long Island. Following high school his family moved to Riverside, California, where Dan developed his driving skills by weaving through Southern California orange groves. He graduated from Menlo Junior College and served two years with the United States Army, most of that time overseas in the Korean War. His racing career spanned 15 years, beginning in 1955. During that time he became the top road racing star in America, as well as one of the most popular F1 Grand Prix drivers ever. Gurney etched himself a place in racing lore with exciting battles against drivers like Stirling Moss, Jimmy Clark, John Surtees, Jack Brabham, Graham Hill, Phil Hill and many others on the classic road courses of the Nürburgring, the Targa Florio and Monte Carlo.

By the time he retired from active driving in 1970, Gurney had raced in 312 events in 20 countries with 51 different makes of cars, winning 51 races and finishing on the podium an additional 47 times. Among his most important victories: seven Formula One races, seven Indy Car races, five NASCAR races and two second place finishes at the Indy 500. Additionally he captured wins in Trans-Am, Can-Am and sports car races, including the endurance classics at the Nürburgring, Daytona, Sebring and Le Mans. He claimed 42 career pole positions and started on the front row of the grid an additional 58 times, for a staggering total of 100 front row starts out of his 312 races – a front-row starting grid record of 32 percent. For as great a driver as Dan Gurney was, he was just that much harder to beat – and that much more intimidating to other drivers – when they saw him start the race up front. Gurney's versatility made him the first driver to win races in the four major categories of motor sports: Grand Prix, Indy Car,



NASCAR and sports car. To this day he is one of only two drivers in history (the other being Mario Andretti) who have ever accomplished that feat. His second and third careers as a manufacturer of the Eagle racers, and as team owner of All-American Racers, or AAR, went into full swing upon his retirement in 1970. AAR has been designing and manufacturing racers with great success the last 30 years.

Gurney has been a pioneer of many racing innovations. In 1971 he developed the Gurney Flap, a small flat tab placed at a 90-degree angle at the trailing edge of the car's spoiler to increase down force pressure. When it was first applied to an AAR racecar with Bobby Unser at the wheel, Unser immediately returned to the pits to inform Gurney that all future testing was to be done in secrecy, so profound was the effect the Gurney Flap had on the vehicle's performance. Gurney's team had one full year of exclusive use of the Gurney Flap, before other teams discovered it and began using the device.

He remains the only American in modern day Grand Prix racing to build and race his own Formula One car to victory, at the 1967 Grand Prix of Belgium. His exuberant gesture of spraying champagne into the crowd from the victory podium in Le Mans 30 years ago has been emulated worldwide by winners ever since. In 1983, AAR entered into a long-term relationship with Toyota, which started its involvement in international motor racing at around that time. AAR designed and built the GTP Toyota Eagle, a car which would become legendary for its looks, speed, reliability and winning streaks: 17 consecutive victories during 1992 and 1993. The highly successful Toyota relationship would last 17 years, until 1999.

Gurney is no stranger to Hollywood either. A member of the Screen Actors Guild since 1965, Gurney has appeared in such motor racing films as "Winning", "A Man and a Woman", and "Grand Prix". His win of the Cannonball Run across the United States in 1971 inspired his friend and co-pilot Brock Yates to write the screenplay for the "Cannonball" movies.