

Discrimination, Liberation, Domination- Carol Cox and the 1962 Winternationals

Written by Dave Wallace on June 28, 2018

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Two of the most significant streaks in motorsports history are also among the most overlooked whenever pioneer women are discussed. In the five months following NHRA's refusal of her entry into Indianapolis's first Nationals, veteran SoCal driver Carol Cox's letter-writing and phone-calling campaign raised such a ruckus with politicians, sponsors, and local competitors that Wally Parks reluctantly relented, allowing female participation in the February 1962 Winternationals. That event's first and only "lady driver" made the most of the breakthrough by winning S/Stock Automatic with a street-driven '61 Pontiac

Catalina in 13.06 seconds at 107.65 miles per hour. Afterwards, she struggled to hoist a Winternationals trophy for HRM's Tex Smith and a nearly all-male audience that had loudly cheered the local lady through eliminations.



In September, Cox avenged 1961's Indy indignity by humbling two dozen manly men at the Nationals, NHRA's only other major meet. Her heavily favored victims included runnerup Ray Christian's '60 Plymouth (pictured) and the HOT ROD Magazine Special, a new Chrysler 300.

Meanwhile, as if one perfect season wasn't enough for one family, Carol's hubby was simultaneously winning with Pontiacs entered into the '62 Winternationals (SS/SA) and Nationals (A/Factory Experimental) by Mickey Thompson, who employed Lloyd Cox as an engineer and slush-box specialist. In 56 NHRA seasons since, no other driver nor husband-wife combo has trophied at every national event. Nevertheless, the couple's accomplishments went relatively unrecognized until recently—too late for both Poncho-powered pioneers: Carol survives at 90, but suffers from advanced dementia; Lloyd died at 47 in a freak motorcycle accident, struck by a train during a 1972 off-road race.