

Ak Miller, 84; Pioneer Drag Racer Helped Found Hot Rod Assn.

By SHAV GLICK
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Ak Miller, a pioneer drag racer who had a career as a driver and car builder in many facets of motor racing for six decades, died Dec. 15 of a heart attack in a rest home in Pico Rivera. He was 84.

Miller began his racing career on Southern California's dry lakes in the 1930s as a charter member of the Roadrunners, one of a group of car clubs that created the Southern California Timing Assn. and the National Hot Rod Assn. He served twice as president of the SCTA and was a charter member of the NHRA, serving as vice president with Wally Parks as the founding president.

After a long association with land speed record attempts on the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah and Muroc Dry Lake (now Rogers Dry Lake at Edwards Air Force Base), Miller was elected to the Dry Lakes Hall of Fame.

Miller also competed in the Pikes Peak Hill Climb, Baja 1000 off-road races and events in Italy and Mexico. With Ray Brock as his crewman, Miller won in his class nine times at Pikes Peak and also won the 1963 Baja 1000.

For the La Carrera Panamericana, a race that spans the length of Mexico held to celebrate the completion of the Pan-American Highway in 1950, Miller built his Ak Miller Special, "El Caballo de Hierro" ("The Iron Horse"), a conglomerate that had an Oldsmobile engine and a 1927 Model T Ford body mounted on a 1950 Ford chassis. According to racing lore, the Mexicans called it "Ensalada" because it was a "salad" of parts.

In 1953, Miller had no trailer and no sponsor except for Hot Rod magazine, so he drove the car from his home in Whittier to the start of the race in Juarez, Mexico. Then he "did a little fine-tuning," raced over the 2,000-mile course for six days and drove back home.

"We were young and tough," Miller recalled recently. "We could race for 20 hours and we wanted to prove a hot rod could do it."

Born Akton Moeller, in Denmark, Miller migrated to Whittier with his parents as a child.

As a teenager, he worked in the Nixon family store and in later years enjoyed recalling that young Richard M. Nixon often asked him to bring him a

candy bar and to "help yourself as well."

Years later, when Miller was at the White House with a group of racing personalities, he was being kidded by friends about the legitimacy of his story when President Nixon walked into the room, grasped

Miller's hand and said, "Ak, did you bring me a candy bar?"

There are no survivors and there will be no services. Miller told friends that he wanted his ashes scattered at the Bonneville, Pikes Peak and Baja race courses.



National Dragster Archives

AK MILLER

Miller at the wheel with Hot Rod magazine's Ray Brock, left, and Wally Parks at Pikes Peak Hill Climb, which Miller won nine times.