



October 2017 Her Story ENewsletter Race Car Drivers

Business Week recently featured an article on the economics of racing cars. It highlighted Julia Landauer, referred to as the best female racer since Danica Patrick. Do you know that Shirley Muldowney and Janet Guthrie actually paved the way for Danica Patrick and Julia Landauer?

The first woman to receive a license from the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) to drive a Top Fuel dragster, Shirley Muldowney has been called the "First Lady of Drag Racing." She loved both speed and competing as a teenager. Channeling her passion into something a little safer than racing on local streets, Muldowney discovered drag racing. In 1965, she became the first woman to be licensed in the supercharged gasoline dragster category. After the Top Gas category was eliminated in 1971, she moved into the "funny car" category. Her first national win came in 1971, as did her first runner-up finish. Funny cars were not much safer than street racing and she survived multiple fires. She set her sights on the next step up - Top Fuel.



Shirley Muldowney

In 1973, Muldowney became the first woman licensed in the Top Fuel category and, in 1974, a semi-final finisher. In 1975, she recorded two firsts: the first woman to advance to the finals in a Top Fuel event and the first woman to break the five second barrier. For these and other accomplishments that year she was named to the "All America Team" by the American Auto Racing Writers & Broadcasters Association. In 1976, she became the first woman to win an NHRA professional event. Muldowney continued to race for forty years, retiring in 2003.



Janet Guthrie

The first woman to qualify and compete in both the Indianapolis 500 and the Daytona 500, Janet Guthrie was a pilot and aerospace engineer. She began competing in 1963 when she purchased a Jaguar coupe. By 1972, she was racing full time and had won two races. In 1976, she was the first woman to compete at the NASCAR Winston Cup. In 1977, she became the first woman to race at the Indianapolis 500; she would finish ninth during the 1978 race. Also in 1977, she was the first woman and Top Rookie at the Daytona 500, finishing twelfth after her engine blew two cylinders, with just two laps to complete the race. Her best finish in the eleven Indy events in which she competed was fifth place.

Guthrie's helmet and driver's suit are displayed at the Smithsonian Institution. She has been inducted into the International Women's Sports Hall of Fame as well as the International Motorsports Hall of Fame. She retired from racing largely because she couldn't secure adequate sponsorship - at the time, provided primarily by corporations - due to her gender.

Shirley Muldowney and Janet Guthrie are among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Women's accomplishments continue to inspire and encourage us. Help us to tell women's stories!

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