

Director Bio-Chuk Williams

I was born in a grocery store in Maryville, Tennessee-perhaps that's why I owned a grocery store later on in life! My family lived in the mountains of East Tennessee, no phone, no electricity, and no worries as long as the local constables didn't get too close to my Pap's still. I helped my Dad make good whiskey, milked cows, rode horses, farmed, and did all the other things that hillbilly kids do when they're growing up. At a very early age I became interested in steam engines, and built several small steam plants in my fathers' shop. College had always been the plan for the future, then the future arrived and suddenly there I was-studying to be an engineer. Very quickly, it became obvious that I was not destined to be a college student for very long. One must actually take the time to study, but that severely limits the time available for the pursuit of all the extracurricular activities! The spelling of my name-Chuk-originated during the wild times of those late teenage years-but that's a story for another time...

After my tour of Viet Nam-courtesy of the US Army, I spent a few years exploring-hitchhiking cross country, hobbing on freight trains, working in a traveling carnival, and literally dozens of other odd jobs. The early 70s were a magical time to have worked and traveled the way I did, and although I had some tough, challenging times-I now enjoy the memories. I had always been interested in flying, and so decided that perhaps now might be the right time to see if I had what it took to be a commercial pilot. I found an accredited flight school in Florida, took advantage of the GI Bill, and did pretty well in school there. After graduation, I got a job in S Florida at a small puddle-jumper air service as a pilot. For a short time, I thought I had found the perfect occupation, but-again-quickly realized that it was far too regimented for me. On the road again, for a few more years I bummed around the country driving a long-haul truck -thinking about what I wanted to do with my life. My uncle was a union electrician, and kept hounding me to get into a well-paying profession such as his. I finally gave in, went to school and became a journeyman electrician. I worked on the Alaska Pipeline for a while, various industrial jobs in Washington and Oregon-as well as several years at nuclear powerhouses in Arizona and California. During the time working in Southern California, I lived on a houseboat that my girlfriend and I had

built. In 1980, the girlfriend and I sold our cars and used the cash to spend eight months backpacking around Europe and the Far East. Sailing had always been an interest, so it seemed pretty natural to get involved in sailing and racing around San Diego Bay. A fabulous old racing yacht which had been moored close to my houseboat became mine after a lengthy negotiation. My friends and I refurbished it and went cruising to Mexico and beyond.

Before leaving the US, I went to school in San Diego and acquired a 100 ton Captain's License-which made it possible for me to make a living as a yacht-delivery and charter-boat skipper during the five years that I lived in Mexico. The rest of the world was still calling me, so in '92, I sold everything but the boat, got my affairs in order, and sailed SW across the big blue Pacific to Polynesia...eventually ending up later in Australia.

I spent five gorgeous years in OZ-the people are fantastic, the country is spectacular, and the opportunities for an American entrepreneur are varied and numerous. I was involved in a few different businesses while I was there, and made money with almost all of them. The most interesting business I owned there was a gold trading company that operated in Papua New Guinea....buying gold from the natives in the jungle was scary sometimes-but always interesting!

Back in the USA in the late 90s, I became friends with a fella who owned a bronze foundry. I spent almost a year there working with him, and then started up my own art foundry in Northern California. Steam boats and vehicles had continued to hold my interest throughout my life, but I hadn't been in one place long enough to actually consider building something. Now-for the first time in my adult life-I had a decent shop and a stable lifestyle, and when I wasn't busy casting sculpture-I could resume my long-postponed interest in steam vehicles.

My present interest in steam is focused on full size road or racing vehicles-primarily ones that I can build myself. I'm not a machinist, and don't have the ability or the interest in building a steam engine. Building my own steam vehicle from scratch, using a suitable steam engine-plus a monotube generator that I've built-and then driving it-using it...that's what fires me up.

The first steam vehicle I built utilized a Model T Ford frame and suspension as a starting point, with a Dick Smith monotube generator and a V4 engine from Ebay as the steam plant. Later, I installed a monotube generator that Art Gardiner designed and I built. Since then it's proven to be very dependable and has been involved in countless parades and steam meets. My second steam vehicle-the Dragster-came about as the result of a lunchtime gathering in 2002 at the last Oak Ridge Meet. It has a scratch-built tubular frame, a monotube generator built by Jay Carter, and a 3 cylinder DOHC engine built by Art Gardiner and Jim Tangeman. The Dragster goes thru the eighth mile in nine seconds in its present configuration, with potential for better times in the future.

The past few years have been spent designing/building the Land Steam Record Streamliner, and this vehicle has been the most interesting of the three. We had lots of fun testing it at Bonneville in October, and this August we will make an attempt to set a new Land Steam Record at the Bonneville Salt Flats during Speed Week in August.

Our Club is the best-known Steam Car Club in the USA, and it is up to us to make sure that anyone who wants or needs information about steam power has that information readily available. The combination of the Storeroom archives, and the countless decades of experience that our members have with steam power, gives our Club the unique opportunity to be a major contributor to the future of steam power.

I very much enjoy being a part of the SACA membership, and hope we can keep the Club growing, interesting, and prosperous-on into the future of steam!

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