

**Meet Larry's Angels at St. John's Grand Prix**

Ken Petrie's 208mph Record Run Saturday Through Monday

Lori Vicki Kelly

**Grand Marshall Jim Paxson**

**Indy Cars, Stock Cars & Sports Cars**  
Labor Day Weekend at St. Johns Airpark

Sponsored by:

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**MEDIA RELEASE ON 2006 ST. JOHNS GRAND PRIX**  
**Labor Day Weekend Sept. 1-4, 2006**

The 7<sup>th</sup> Annual St. Johns Grand Prix will be held on Labor Day Weekend, September 1-4, 2006. This event will bring Indy Cars, Stock Cars, Sports Racers, Sports Cars and Karts to the 2 mile Grand Prix roadrace track at St. Johns Airpark. The first event of the weekend will be a race car parade through downtown St. Johns on Saturday morning at 9am.

St. Johns Arizona is the place of origin for auto racing in the west. Starting in 1908 and running through 1924, racers from all over the country came to this small western community to race 3 days for purses ranging from \$1000-2000. Men like Barney Oldfield driving for Ford Motor Company and the Chevrolet Brothers, routinely raced against locals for the prize.

The St. Johns Great American Race started with a 100 mile race from Gallup New Mexico to St. Johns Arizona. The 2<sup>nd</sup> day was a Hill Climb where the St. Johns Airport is located today. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and final day found the racers racing around the community for 100 miles.

The winner of the event was the driver that accumulated the most points over the 3 days of racing. This race was originally started by the Whiting Brothers Ford Dealership in St. Johns which later became the headquarters for the Whiting Brothers gas stations located throughout the southwest. There is still one station left in mid St. Johns across the street from the Whiting homestead.

In the year 2000, Larry & Vicki Pond of Professional AutoSports were invited by a racer that lived in St. Johns to see if they could run a race at the Airpark. The City Council, led by Mayor Ross Overson and City Manager Steve Anderson embraced the idea and the St. Johns Grand Prix was run on July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend. The feature race was Pro 500 Indy Cars with the ProAutoSports sports cars, stock cars and formula cars filling out the race field. Over 200 cars showed up for the first event and it was a great success.

The race was changed in 2002 to Labor Day Weekend because of the Rodeo-Chedeski forest fire in the Arizona White Mountains during June and July that year. It has been held on Labor Day Weekend since.

The 5<sup>th</sup> year was celebrated in 2004 with Jim Paxon as the Grand Marshall. Jim was the fire manager during the Rodeo-Chedeski fire in 2002 and well respected in the White Mountains for his efforts in containing that large forest fire, saving many homes and people potentially in it's path. The 2004 race was the most successful with 200 racers led by the Pro-500 Indy Cars, a midway with 40 vendors, sponsors totaling 45, and the full support of the community. Local radio stations broadcast 40 hours of advertising and coverage. Local newspapers published 40 pages of articles, photos and advertising. The event was rated the #2 tourist destination event in the southwest. News coverage spread to the Phoenix area newspapers and TV.

In 2005, Professional AutoSports Inc. became associated with ASA-Racing, a major nationwide sanctioning body and the St. Johns Grand Prix is now an ASA-Racing event. This year the feature professional race will be the ASA Speed Trucks. ProAutoSports brought a plethora of racers running sports cars, Indy cars, stock cars, open wheel cars, sports racers and Karts.

In an interview, City Manager Eric Duthie stated, "The St, Johns Grand Prix is a great event for our city. Our City Council members support it unanimously. It brings a great economic impact to the community. In addition, it is a highlite of the year in entertainment for our citizens and visitors from all over the country."

Kelly Gunnels, Executive Director of the St. Johns Regional Chamber of Commerce states, "Many of our businesses and families look forward to this event all year. Watching an Indy Car drive down our main street with 100 other race cars in our Saturday morning race car parade is thrilling! I suspect that there are not many places in the world that have such a parade!"

Larry Pond, Managing Director of ASA Professional AutoSports, the sanctioning body and promoter of the event leads the St. Johns Grand Prix Committee made up of race minded community members. They are: Kelly Gunnels, St. Johns Regional Chamber of Commerce, Lori Rothlisberger, St. Johns Custom Works, Betti Miller, Community Citizen, Penny Pew, Apache County Elections Director, Dodie Rothlisberger, NAPA St. Johns, Jim Pierson, New Hope Ranch, Keith Odom, Ace Hardware. Odom Building Center, Michael Cirivello, Apache County Sheriffs Dept, Vicki Pond, Professional AutoSports, And monitored for the city by Eric Duthie, City Manager.

Larry states, "This is truly a community effort to put on the best event possible. The committee members represent leadership in this historic southwest rural community." He goes on to say, "Vicki and I had a vision during our first visit to St. Johns in 2000 that has now come true with the hard work and dedication of the committee, City Council, City Officials and many volunteers. A lot of the volunteers have worked with us every year since the inception of the event. Jake Romero, former city councilman, his brother Frank Romero, Butch Ramey and a host of others have made this event into what it is today. A special man, Gary Liston, Airpark Manager and his family made it possible for the St. Johns Grand Prix to get started and grow into what it is today. The support and enthusiasm of the community have made this a special event for everyone."

Larry further says "this year is a big step forward with TV coverage of the feature race on the Outdoor Life Channel. We expect 5 million households nationwide to view the race. In addition, we will see live radio

broadcasts each day of the event and lots of news coverage.” Racers from all over the country are expected to fill the race fields.

Vicki Pond remarks “the excitement is building. The ticket sales will open June 6<sup>th</sup> at the St. Johns Chamber of Commerce. This will lead to the exciting moment when the Grand Marshall of the race broadcasts the famous words, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, START YOUR ENGINES!”

**INFO:** ASA Professional AutoSports is a Chandler Arizona based race sanctioning body and promoter. ASA-Racing is headquartered in Daytona Beach Florida. ASA Speed Trucks is based in Upland California. For more information contact Larry Pond, 480-664-3872 or Email: [proautosports@cox.net](mailto:proautosports@cox.net).

