

= Eddie Hill =

Eddie Hill (born March 6 , 1936) is a retired American drag racer who won numerous drag racing championships on land and water . Hill had the first run in the four second range (4 @. @ 990 seconds) , which earned him the nickname " Four Father of Drag Racing . " His other nicknames include " The Thrill " , " Holeshoot Hill " , and " Fast Eddie " . In 1960 , he set the NHRA record for the largest improvement in the elapsed time (e.t.) when he drove the quarter mile in 8 @. @ 84 seconds to break the previous 9 @. @ 40 @- @ second record .

Hill raced at open competitions and Top Fuel events from 1955 until he retired in 1966 . After opening a motorcycle shop , he returned several years later to race motorcycles . He started racing drag boats after attending a drag boat event in 1974 and he won championships in all of the major boat drag racing sanctioning bodies . Hill set the lowest wet elapsed time (e.t.) record with a 5 @. @ 16 @- @ second run , which was lower than the land drag racing record of 5 @. @ 39 seconds . He quit water drag racing after he suffered broken bones at a crash in Arizona and returned to land drag racing in 1985 . Initially underfunded and unsuccessful , Hill set the all @- @ time speed record at a National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) event in 1987 , becoming the first person to hold both the land and water speed records simultaneously . In 1993 , Hill became the NHRA 's oldest Top Fuel champion . When Hill retired in 1999 , he had won 12 national season point championships on land or water , and had won more than 100 trophies in motorcycles and 86 drag events between his land and water careers .

= = Racing career = =

In 1947 , 11 @- @ year @- @ old Hill won the Tri @- @ State Motor Scooter Flat Track championship in Shreveport , Louisiana . After graduating from Longview High School , he graduated from college in 1957 with an industrial technology degree from Texas A & M University .

= = = Land drag racing = = =

Hill 's entered his first drag race at the Flying Fish Lodge in Karnack , Texas in 1955 . Hill drove his home @- @ built hot rod to the track and won the event . The hot rod had a Model T frame and an Oldsmobile V8 engine . In 1958 , he built his second dragster using parts that his employer allowed him to scavenge while working as a sales engineer at a foundry in Wichita Falls , Texas . He used the dragster to set the Texas state low elapsed time (e.t.) that year with a 9 @. @ 93 @- @ second pass . The following year , Hill won the state championship with a 9 @. @ 25 @- @ second pass at 161 miles per hour (259 kilometers per hour) . Hill won his first national event in 1959 in a Hot Gas race at an American Hot Rod Association (AHRA) national championship event in Great Bend , Kansas . Hill earned \$ 500 for an appearance at Inyokern , California to race Jack Chrisman and his Sidewinder dragster . One of his four passes in the 1960 event set the B / Gas dragster record at 163 @. @ 04 mph (262 @. @ 39 km / h) , so Hill quit his job to become a full @- @ time drag racer . Later that season he set the a new A / Gas low e.t. at 8 @. @ 84 seconds and set the speed record in the class at 161 @. @ 29 mph (259 @. @ 57 km / h) .

Hill spent four months designing and seven months building another home @- @ built dragster called the Double Dragon . The machine had two engines , with each engine having its own ring gear and pinion , clutch , and driveshaft . He used four rear racing slick tires in open competitions for faster passes , and two rear slicks in match competitions to produce smokier passes . The machine ripped up the starting line at the 1961 NHRA Nationals at Indianapolis . In 1962 , Hill ran 202 @. @ 70 mph (326 @. @ 21 km / h) two years after Chris Karamesines had the first 200 mph (320 km / h) pass and two years before Don Garlits had the first official 200 mph (320 km / h) rpass . A speed or e.t. record is first certified official after it is backed up by a different pass within one percent . Hill built his first Top Fuel dragster in 1963 using a Pontiac engine . He had nearly completed a jet @- @ engine powered ultralight dragster in 1963 when the NHRA outlawed all aircraft engines . He built two more Top Fuel Hemi @- @ powered dragsters before he had an engine fire at Green Valley

Race City in 1966 . " It was one of those fireballs that you couldn 't see through , " Hill said . " I locked up the brakes , and it felt like I needed to turn the wheel to the left , but for some reason , I didn 't . I had to do something that was counterintuitive , and it spooked me . " Hill had managed to steer straight down a course that was lined with trees . Hill had been using the Double Dragon to win matches , which were used to finance his Top Fuel dragster . The Double Dragon had been destroyed in a wreck two months before this fire . The fire tapped his finances and his resolve to drag race .

= = = Motorcycle racing = = =

He stopped racing and opened a motorcycle dealership in Wichita Falls in 1966 . The dealership is still open (as of 2008) , and it is now the oldest Honda and Kawasaki dealership in Texas . He soon wanted to race again , so he built his own motorcycle and began racing as a 30 @-@ year @-@ old . He raced in numerous types of motorcycle racing : cross country , drag racing , hare scramble , motocross , road racing , and short track . When Hill participated in a Daytona race in 1971 , he had an opening lap at 151 mph (243 km / h) , which was faster than factory rider Gary Nixon . Hill continued to race motorcycles and in 1972 and won the Texas state road racing championship . Hill won over 100 trophies in his motorcycle career .

= = = Boat drag racing = = =

Hill attended his first boat drag racing event in 1974 at Austin , Texas . He thought the drivers were " crazy " after he saw a driver being thrown from his boat during a crash . Less than a month later , Hill had stopped motorcycle racing to drag race boats , despite not being able to swim . " Once I hit the water with the boat , I never went back to motorcycles , " Hill recalled . " The power , speed , and acceleration were all things that I had missed since I quit drag racing . " He began racing in a non @-@ blown hydroplane , winning in his first event . In his third race he set the class top speed . In 1975 , he set the Southern Drag Boat Association (SDBA) speed record at 137 @.@ 46 mph (221 @.@ 22 km / h) . In 1976 , he switched to nitromethane fuel and set the SDBA record with a 171 @.@ 81 mph (276 @.@ 50 km / h) run . He was the SDBA top pointgetter and won the National Drag Boat Association (NDBA) World Fuel & Gas championship . He repeated as champion in both series in 1977 , setting the NDBA record with a 170 @.@ 45 mph (274 @.@ 31 km / h) run .

Hill raced an all white blown @-@ fuel hydroplane from 1978 to 1984 . He won 55 of 103 races during that time . Hill captured four American Drag Boat Association (ADBA) championships and was the SDBA top points earner in five consecutive years . In 1982 , his Top Fuel hydroplane went 229 @.@ 00 mph (368 @.@ 54 km / h) at an NDBA event to set the world 's record for a quarter mile water drag at Chowchilla , California . It was recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records , and it was not broken for 10 years . Hill also set speed records that year in the SDBA (220 @.@ 76 mph) , ADBA (215 @.@ 82 mph) , and International Hot Boat Association (IHBA) (212 @.@ 78 mph) . He became the only racer to hold records in all four associations simultaneously . He won the NDBA Nationals four times including three straight from 1982 until 1984 . In 1983 and 1984 , Hill won the World Series of Drag Boat Racing championship . The series features two races in each of the four major drag boat racing sanctioning bodies . He won 17 races between 1983 and 1984 , and made 29 of 34 final rounds . Before he quit boat drag racing , he had an elapsed time of 5 @.@ 16 seconds in the wet quarter mile at Firebird Lake in Chandler , Arizona . The e.t. was quicker than Gary Beck 's 5 @.@ 39 @-@ second NHRA Top Fuel dragster record , the first time that the water record was lower than the land record . Hill quit boat racing in October 1984 after a crash at 217 miles per hour . " It was a perfect run , " Hill recalled . " I started to settle the boat back into the water , and then it took off . " His Texas A & M ring was torn off his hand ; he suffered seven broken bones , a concussion , & eye injuries . He spent five days in the hospital and was not fully recovered for a year .

= = = Return to drag racing = = =

Hill decided to come back into drag racing for 1985 . He purchased Dan Pastorini 's Top Fuel car and salvaged the drag boat engine from the bottom of the lake . He joined one of the most underfunded and least competitive Top Fuel teams . Hill would have quit early in the 1986 season had he not gotten some tuning advice from a competitor that helped make his car more competitive . Fifteen races after returning , he finally got out of the first round at the 1986 Mile High Nationals . Hill made it to the final round of competition , losing to Larry Minor when he lost reverse after his burnout . At the 1987 Chief Auto Parts Nationals , where he was runner @-@ up , Hill set an NHRA record of 285 @. @ 98 mph (460 @. @ 24 km / h) In doing so , he became the first person to hold both the land and water quarter mile drag racing speed records simultaneously .

Hill won the first of his thirteen NHRA national events when he beat Joe Amato in final of the 1988 Mac Tools Gatornationals . Amato and Hill met in four final rounds that season , with Hill winning three . On April 9 , 1988 , he set the first four second elapsed time (4 @. @ 990 seconds) at the International Hot Rod Association (IHRA) Texas Nationals . Hill made the run on only seven cylinders ; the post @-@ run computer readout showed his # 7 cylinder failed at launch . Six months later , Hill recorded a 4 @. @ 936 @-@ second e.t. at the NHRA SuperNationals at Houston on October 9 , 1988 . Hill set the record as the oldest Top Fuel champion when he won the season championship as a 57 @-@ year @-@ old . It was his twelfth championship . Hill won a record @-@ tying six of seven national events and 15 events overall . Hill finished in the Top 10 in Top Fuel points for all but one of the years between 1987 and 1995 . Between 1994 and 1999 , Hill won his final two events in seven finals . When Hill won the 1996 Mile High Nationals , he set the record for the oldest Top Fuel event winner at age 60 . He retired in 1999 .

= = " Eddie Hill Rule " = =

Hill was qualifying for a 1997 event at Sonoma when his car suffered severe vibration as he crossed the finish line . The car went out of control and was completely destroyed . Hill had two broken toes and a shoulder contusion , which were not serious injuries . The run had been fast enough to make Hill the fastest qualifier , and Hill wanted to race his backup car in the first round on the day after the accident . The NHRA had a rule that the car used for qualifying had to be used in the event , so the sanctioning body did not allow him to compete . The rule was changed after the event to allow racers to race on race day even if they do not use the same car .

= = Innovations = =

In 1960 , he became the first driver to heat his rear tires with a burnout and he was the first driver to use smaller front tires on a dragster in 1958 . Hill introduced the aerodynamic front wing to dragsters and charcoal masks for driver safety .

= = Personal life = =

Hill is married to Erchie Hill . They met at a boat drag racing event and were married on Valentine 's Day in 1984 . She had several roles during his career , including team co @-@ owner , starting line navigator , record taker , pit crew member , business manager , marketing , and public relations . She has written about drag racing in National Dragster , AutoWeek , and Christian Motorsports magazines . Eddie has a daughter named Sabrina and a son named Dustin .

= = Awards = =

NHRA ranked him 14th on their Top 50 drivers in 2001 . He was inducted in the NHRA Drag Racing Hall of Fame in 1978 , and the Texas Motor Sports Hall of Fame in 2007 . In 2000 , he was inducted in Don Garlits ' International Drag Racing Hall of Fame . Hill was inducted into the Motorsports Hall of Fame of America in 2002 . After he was notified of his nomination , he said

" It 's so much more satisfying to get this award now than posthumously . This way I 'll be able to enjoy it . Honestly , it was a sobering moment when they called and told me I was being inducted along with some of the people I admired most growing up . It gives you reason to pause for a moment and reflect that maybe some good was accomplished along the way . "

In 1988 , Hill was selected by Car Craft magazine , Hot Rod Magazine , and the International Hot Rod Association as the Person of the Year . Car Craft magazine 's readers voted him the Top Fuel Driver of the Year after he won the 1993 championship .