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(Continued from page 7)

A motorcycle mishap hasn't deterred Steve Burns. Need for speed?

Steve Burns, of Ukiah, Calif. (pop. 15,497), spent Speed Week trying to break the 188 mph land speed record in his motorcycle class. "We had the record for awhile," says Burns, "but we lost it a few years back and went back after it." Burns says the experience of driving a motorcycle at such speeds is thrilling, but he's also aware of the risks.

In 2005, Burns walked away from a serious crash on his modified 1982 Suzuki. "I got in a big speed wobble," he says. "I was going a little over 190 mph. I wobbled it down to 150 or so before it got me off. I hit the ground at 115 mph and got up and walked away."

The allure of speed also is matched by the challenge of building a vehicle and seeing how well it will run. There's no catalog of Bonneville speed punts, Burns says. "Ninety-five percent of this stuff is garage-built with guys and their buddies sitting around trying to figure out what will work."

In 2005, Bill Wadden and his friends spent four months in a garage reassembling and modifying a 1950 Ford coupe that was sitting in an old barn near his home in DeWitt, Ill. (pop. 188).

"We put in a lot of 16- and 20-hour days," says Wadden, 68. "But I've always been a car nut."

Although a heart condition has kept him from driving the hot and in recent years, it wasn't difficult to find a replacement driver. "When the word got out that I was going to build a car, he showed up on my doorstep," Wadden says, pointing to driver Steve Turpin. "I've been wanting to do this since I was 15 and reading *Hot Rod* magazine," says Turpin, 62.

Although it took two 12-hour days of driving to get to the Salt Flats, it's all worth it, Turpin says. "It's one great big family out here," he says. "Everybody is your friend."

To those young, hot-rodders dreaming of the adrenaline rush that comes with the unfettered speeds of the Salt Flats, Turpin says Bonneville doesn't disappoint. "There's no other place like it in the world," he says. "You've just got to come." ★

Story by Richard McMye, www.fox.com

americanprofile.com • Page 10

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