



**T**HIS WAS NOT J. C. Agajanian's year at Indianapolis. Last year was his year. His and Parnelli Jones'. They were sitting on top of the world then, owner and driver with the fastest speeds and most money won in the history of the 500. This was A. J. Foyt's year, and Shirley Murphy's and Bill Ansted's, who own the Sheraton-Thompson roadster Foyt muscled into victory lane.

Aggie and Parnelli were sitting sadly on their pit wall this year, their pockets picked of all the speed and money marks, when Foyt rolled home. Aggie, the millionaire Southern California hog-rancher, garbage-collector and racing-promoter, one of the sport's most controversial and colorful figures, who hides the light of his balding head under a 10-gal. Stetson, had no complaints.

"We're lucky to be alive," he said.

"Had we been running gasoline, and not a methanol blend, neither I nor Parnelli would be around to talk about it," claims 51-year-old Aggie, his olive-skinned, Armenian face sad and serious.

Jones, driving a front-engine heavy-weight, his rear tank only half-full with methanol, ready to risk extra pit stops in quest of more track speed, was in the lead at 135 miles and pulling away from his first pit stop when his tank blew up. Parnelli twisted and fell free as aides rushed up to slap his smoldering uniform, halt his rolling car and douse the blaze with foam.

"We didn't think the rear engines could run 155 mph or more on gas, as they did. If we'd known, we'd have used gas. We were wrong luckily," J. C. explained. "We thought we could run faster, if not as long, on methanol, especially carrying only 55 gal. in our 90-gal. tank, lightening our load some 200 lb.

"I watched our mechanic, Johnny Pouelson, as he very carefully twisted the nozzle out of the tank so there would be no spillage. Apparently, with the tank only half-full, fumes built up. When he slammed the cap on, as the car was pushed away, the cap, the whole top of the tank, about a foot square, secured by 30 bolts, almost instantly exploded with horrible force and flew past my head and I could see flames inside the tank.

"I ran after Jones, who didn't know, yelling at him, and he got out with second-degree burns on his left forearm. The car was damaged, but that didn't matter, only Parnelli mattered. Had it been gasoline, the explosion and fire would have been so much worse, I'm sure none of us would have survived, and, being in the pits as we were, I'm not sure what other terrible damage might have been caused.

"In the early years, there were no safety precautions," Agajanian says. "Now, the 500, like most of racing, is as safe as man can make it. In this case, I am one of the USAC Board of Directors

and I am sure we will ban gasoline in the future. It remains a dangerous sport in which accidents are inevitable. The loss of Sachs and MacDonald is hard to take, but they would have been the last ones to have wanted it used as a weapon against the sport they loved."

Race-car owners and promoters are sometimes likened to boxing managers, who sit back to count the purses while their tigers go into battle, taking the risks and beatings. Agajanian reflects the feelings of all when he says

"Lord knows why, but there are always fellows who want to drive racing cars. It's up to the car-owners and promoters to see that everything is done to help and protect them. As both a car-owner and a promoter, I do my best to pick drivers who are ready, to get the best cars and equipment and mechanics, to see that the cars and the tracks are in the best possible shape.

"I've turned someone away when there was any doubt and I've gone to the officials to protest anything I felt wrong or dangerous, no matter how small. I have never asked anyone to drive when he didn't feel he should, or to drive faster than he felt he should. A driver in a race knows how fast he can go. I'm sure he wants to win as much as I do."

He shook his head wistfully "Racing is a lot safer than the average person realizes. But, accidents are going to happen. It's part of the game. I always say a little prayer for my drivers. The Man upstairs has a lot to do with it. And I feel if I take care of my responsibilities as well as I can, there's not much more I can do beyond that. It really hurts when one of the boys is lost, but I thank God it hasn't happened to me more than it has."

**T**HERE HAVE BEEN a few drivers killed in races promoted by Agajanian, but only one driver was ever killed driving for him, in a car he owned, and he was not there to see it. "Some fellows who have driven for me have died racing, but not at the time they were driving for me," Aggie explained. "The one exception was Cecil Green; it was the only time he ever drove for me and the

circumstances were most unusual.

"Troy Ruttman was my driver at the time, 1951 He was scheduled to drive in a big-car race at Williams Grove, Pa., one Sunday There was a sprint car race at Winchester, Ind., the same day and Troy wanted me to give his buddy, Cecil, the ride in my sprint car. Winchester was a rough track and I didn't think Green was ready to handle it, so I refused.

"However, Troy flew to California and went fishing with me and talked up Cecil all day Finally, I said, 'You didn't come all the way out here to go fishing with me. If getting Green the ride means that much to you and if you're that sure of him, all right, but tell him to be careful.'

"I wasn't at the race, but here's what happened. In practice, Cecil spun before reaching the first turn on the first lap. In qualifying, he lost it again in the same place, locked up, hit the fence and was killed.

"Bill Mackey, one of the drivers who went out to get Cecil and who got to examine the area as he helped clean up, was next out to qualify, and, in the exact same spot, he spun, hit the fence and was killed. Neither ever reached the first turn of the first lap.

"Meanwhile, at Williams Grove, Ruttman won, but Walt Brown was killed in an accident in that race. I don't think I have to tell you how I felt and how Ruttman felt at the end of that day"

Ruttman was Aggie's first 500 winner J. C. first visited the 500 in 1946 and put his first entry on the track two years later In 17 successive years there, he has sponsored 25 entries, placed in the top 10 a half-dozen times, won the pole position three times and the race twice.

An exceptional talent scout, Aggie has introduced some of the finest newcomers the race has had, including Walt Faulkner, Ruttman and Jones, and he has also had Tony Bettenhausen, Gene Hartley, Duane Carter, Chuck Stevenson, Johnny Parsons, Johnny Mantz and Lloyd Ruby in his cockpits.

Aggie's first year there, he had Johnny Mantz in an \$18,000 car and finished 13th. His share of the purse was \$2230.

Mauri Rose averaged 119 mph and took the winner's share of \$42,800.

Last year, with Jones in a \$35,000 car, averaging 143 mph to win, Jones collected \$148,000 of the \$493,000 payoff.

This year, the ever-mounting prizes totaled \$506,625 with Foyt taking \$153,650. Jones and Agajanian, placing 23rd and splitting 50-50 as is customary, settled for \$8200.

Agajanian had \$150,000 invested in two cars, the completely rebuilt Old 98 and a new rear-engine job, six spare engines, parts and tires at the track. "I have a crew of 16 that goes to work, they have expenses and I have three station wagons and my own car It isn't cheap," he points out.

**I**T HAS BEEN said that the always sartorially-splendid J. C. is on the conservative side as far as spending money on racing is concerned. However, the privately-wealthy promoter insists he has spent more than he should on racing and has done little better than break even over the years.

"I am fortunate enough to be able to afford racing," he explains. "It is a sport, also a business, but a bad business. Very few of the individual car-owners or promoters, or even the drivers, can make a decent living out of it. They have to be sportsmen who love it and are perhaps willing to treat it as a hobby The big firms get promotional advertising from it and I welcome their increased interest in our sport, but I hope they never drive the little fellows out."

Over the years, Aggie has had more bad than good luck at Indianapolis. His first entry was the last one to drive the distance without a pit stop. Clay Smith was J. C.'s mechanic in those years and he devised a fuel mixture which would permit driver Johnny Mantz to go 500 miles at the average speed of the previous year's winner, 116 mph. The tires held up and it worked, except that speeds rose and Mantz finished 13th.

Aggie had his first pole-position winner in 1950 in little Walt Faulkner, a rookie. Driving an early Kurtis-Kraft creation, Faulkner got on the track seconds before the closing gun on the first

# AGGIE

by Bill Libby

**Hog-Rancher,  
Garbage-Collector,  
Race-Promoter & Gentleman-  
J.C. Agajanian,  
the Haberdasher's Best Friend**

# AGGIE

## From Little Acorns, a Checkered Flag Has Grown

qualifying day and sped 136.013 mph for one lap and 134.343 for four laps to break records held by the Novi and end the reign of front-drive cars. Johnny Parsons went on to win a rain-shortened 345-mile event with Faulkner seventh.

The next year, Duke Nalon recaptured the pole and speed records for the Novi team, but, after Faulkner and a new car reached the track late, they regained the speed marks on the third qualifying day with 138.122 and 136.872 clockings. As he wheeled into the pits, Faulkner found a grinning Agajanian waving his 10-gal. hat from atop a grinning Nalon's shoulders. Lee Wallard won that race, while Faulkner settled for 15th.

**A**GGIE HAD HIS first winner the following year when Bill Vukovich, seemingly a certain victor, was eliminated 25 miles from home by a broken steering pivot-pin. Ruttman rolled by at 128.922 to become, at 22, the youngest winner ever

Then came some lean years for the various cars that carried the familiar No. 98. Johnny Parsons brought one home fourth in 1956, but demolished his car in practice the next year. Troy Ruttman and Chuck Daigh failed to qualify a new car the next two years, making it three straight times Aggie failed to make the show. Then came Jones. Like Faulkner, Jones is good and fast, but not lucky. Faulkner never won. Jones has now led the race each of his four years in it, but barely won once.

As a sensational rookie in 1961, Jones qualified a car prepared by Pouelson sixth fastest at 146 mph and led for 75 miles until a bolt was sucked off the track, cut him above the eye and nearly blinded him with blood. He refused relief. However, as he was unable to adjust his fuel mixture properly, his engine was flooded until a piston gave way. Trailing smoke, he dropped back to finish 12th.

The next year, Jones broke the 150 mph barrier with a 150.729 fast lap and 150.370 average, taking the pole, and led for 123 of the first 125 laps until an inch-long piece of brake line bent and wore out, permitting the fluid to escape. Jones drove the rest of the way without brakes, making two hair-raising pit-stops and placing seventh.

"Well, we really gave them a show for awhile, anyway, didn't we?" Aggie said later, grinning wistfully, holding his head

high. Always a symbol of sportsmanship in the face of adversity, Aggie later had the inch-long piece of bent metal fashioned into a key-chain ornament and he displays it proudly. "This few cents worth of metal cost me \$100,000," he grins.

Ironically, an auxiliary braking system had been discarded to save 14 lbs. Pouelson now installs a system that retains braking power even after any faulty braking area has been eliminated. Controversy over the wild ride Jones was permitted to complete has led to a rule barring cars without brakes.

Parnelli had brakes last year but didn't use them much. He retained the pole, upping his records to 155.847 for one lap and 151.541 for four, led 167 laps and won by a wide margin at a record average of 143.137. However, a cracked and leaking oil tank almost caused him to be black-flagged off in the late stages.

Chief Steward Harlan Fengler held the black flag hesitantly in his hand while Colin Chapman, head of the revolutionary Lotus-Ford team, protested and Agajanian pleaded. It was a wild track-side scene. Fengler finally put the flag away, as the level of oil in Jones' tank soon dropped below the crack and stopped spilling out.

Later, driver Sachs and Roger McClusky blamed spin-outs on the slippery track and insisted that had Agajanian not been such a powerful and influential person his car would not have been permitted to finish. Sachs carried his complaints into a restaurant, where Jones decked him. Later, they made up.

Agajanian insisted Fengler's actions were not prejudiced. "I have to obey the rules just like everyone else," he said. "But a lot of cars were dropping oil, not just ours. It would have been like having the heavyweight boxing champion ahead for 14 rounds, then having the title taken away from him because of a cut in the last round."

Others, including 2-time winner Rodger Ward agreed. "Parnelli deserved the victory and it would have been a shame to have had it taken from him," he said.

After the race, there was strong speculation that the rear-engine bantams were taking over. Some Indianapolis veterans regretted the probability, but not J. C., who said, "We've been in a rut, fast asleep. We should thank Chapman for

shaking our industry up. I think it creates new interest and I'm very enthused."

He still wasn't sure the front-engine heavyweights weren't best for the big, 2.5-mile Indianapolis layout, so he had Frank Kurtis and Pouelson re-do Old 98 (hiding the oil tank inside), but he also had Culver City sports car designers Dick Troutman and Tom Barnes create a new rear-engine lightweight for Jones. Jones never gave it a real try. While many drivers, including Ward and Bobby Marshman, went to the new rear-engine racers, Jones and Foyt stubbornly stuck to front-engine machines.

**T**HE ENTIRE FRONT ROW and seven of the first 10 cars turned out to be rear-engined with Clark taking the pole and speed records from Jones at 159.377 and 158.828. Jones blew his new engine the morning of qualifying and had to use his winning engine of the year before to get in the race. He ran fourth fastest in the car he called "old Calhoun," his 6-year-old antique, at 155, far faster than ever before, but not fast enough. Foyt landed beside him in a second-year "dinosaur"

Although Jones warned that, "The boys ahead of me better stand on it," and Foyt was snarling, it was clear before the race that they and their sponsors now knew they couldn't keep up with the new cars, felt they had made a mistake, and were discouraged and pessimistic. And, in the early running of the race, they were outdistanced. However, as we now know, it was not for long.

Clark's soft tires shredded, straining rear suspension components. Marshman was cut off into the infield where his oil plug was knocked off. And Ward had fuel problems. Suddenly, the rear-engine challenge had been thwarted for another year. Jones passed Foyt and was rolling in front until his disastrous pit stop. After that, it was all Foyt.

"It was our good racing luck that gave us the lead and our bad racing luck that cost us the race," Agajanian says. "It's just one of those things. I thought we had it won, but we didn't. That's the way it goes."

Although the Bowes Seal Fast-Agajanian Special has been completely rebuilt from the frame up each year, Aggie doubts that it can or should be worked on again. A historic car, one of the greatest in 500 history, it will probably be donated to the Speedway Museum. "Maybe Jones can have it made into a key-chain," a wise-guy cracked.

Jones and Foyt may now have support in their tentative feeling that the front-engine roadsters have won a reprieve, but Aggie does not agree. "I think they'll change their minds after thinking it over," he says. "They know now that the rear-engine lightweights are faster, the only question is, are they as durable? Clark and Gurney did go the distance last year and Ward did this

year, and it wasn't engine failure that knocked the others out.

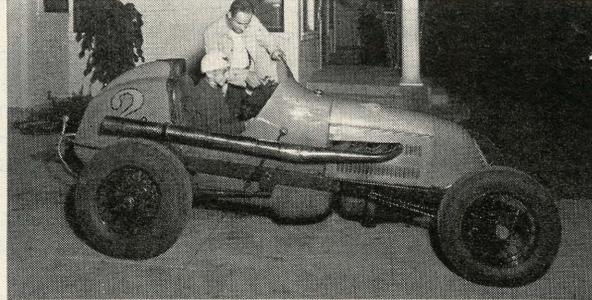
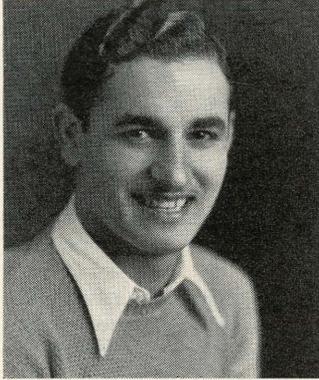
"The way rear-engine cars are designed, the drivers have to be flanked by twin fuel-tanks. I know some of the boys feel this isn't safe, and this is a factor. But it may be that we can build these tanks stronger or with fire walls. And it may be that if we eliminate gasoline, we eliminate the real risk. I don't know if

Offenhausers or Fords or something else are the best way to power them, but that's something we'll have to find out. It's not improbable that we will have rear-engine sprint and midget cars before long, too.

"The fact is, these rear-engine cars are still new to Indianapolis and to our race tracks. We've been learning a lot about them and there are a lot of im-

provements going to be made on them, I'm sure. I don't know whether we'll redesign the car we didn't run this year or build a new one entirely, but I do know there are a lot of things we want to try. We'll probably experiment with the car we have on some other paved tracks.

"I don't know how Jones or Foyt eventually will feel, I don't know if Jones



**COUSIN CONNIE**, a soap-box derby champion, gets a look at one of Aggie's earliest cars—a sprinter circa 1940.

**EVEN AT** high school graduation in 1932, Aggie had that dapper look!

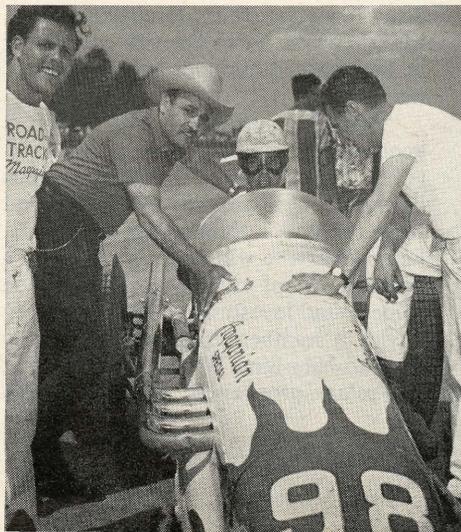


**WINNER'S CIRCLE** in '52 for Aggie and driver Troy Ruttman.

**SMITH AND** Aggie provided Freddie Agabashian with car for his Sacramento win in 1949 race.



**THE GREAT** Bill Vukovich drove one of Aggie's cars in '52, in Denver race J. C. promoted.



**A JUBILANT** Aggie welcomes '50 Indianapolis pole-winner, record-setter Walt Faulkner.



**REX MAYS**, Aggie, Clay Smith and Johnny Mantz (left to right) look over a new car in '48.

**HAPPY CHORE** for Aggie is flagging Mobil runs.



# AGGIE

## There's a Ford in Aggie's Future

will want a new roadster for next year, but I really do feel we've got to go with the rear engines eventually, and the fellows that put it off may be the ones who lose out."

Although twice national sprint car champion and considered the best driver at the Indianapolis track in particular, Jones has never shown his best form on the big-car championship trail and has not been able to keep up with the dominant Foyt and Ward.

He has won only three races, including the 500, in the four years he has driven through this Memorial Day, and he placed in the top 10 in only half of last season's dozen events. Throughout the campaign, he was plagued with magneto trouble. Things got so discouraging, Aggie asked Jones if he wanted Pouelson replaced. Jones refused. "What's happened hasn't been Pouelson's fault. We'll lick this thing together" he said.

Aggie was delighted. "Pouelson is one of the greatest," he says. "He has prepared cars for us that have been much faster than any other car most of the time and not much slower the rest of the time." At Jones' urging, J. C. has given him a new car to run the dirt track events and it is hoped that once he recovers from his minor burns, Parnelli will be able to finish the season strongly.

**W**ITH RESERVATIONS, J. C. rates Jones the best driver he has ever had. "Faulkner was a terrific man, the first to really do a job for me. He was small but he had a heart like a lion. He died before he had a full chance to show what he might have done. Bettenhausen was one of the greatest drivers I've ever known, he never cheated a soul when he drove and he was always ready to do a favor for a friend. But, he did not drive a great deal for me. Bill Vukovich drove for me, though not in the 500. He was tremendous, but died young.

"Ruttman had the greatest natural ability I've ever seen in a race driver, possibly still has it, many think so, but he's wasted it," Aggie says sadly. The fun-loving Ruttman partied himself to poverty

"I remember the day after Troy won the 500," J. C. recalls. "I said to him, 'Troy, you're going to be driving all season, you'll be getting appearance money and picking up some purses, why don't you let me invest your 500 win-

nings for you? That way you'll not only hang on to some money, but show a profit.'

"Ruttman blew up: 'What are you trying to do, get out of giving me my money? I earned it and I need it. I'm in hock for some of it already,' he said." Aggie shrugged. "What could I do? I wrote him a check for his share and he went off with it. Before long, he'd spent it. For a long time, he spent everything."

Troy left Aggie, his marriage broke up, he got fat and he lost his desire. In recent years, a remarried, reformed, slimmed-down Ruttman has been driving regularly again, but without particular success. He finished 18th at Indianapolis this year. Years later, Troy asked Aggie how much his bankroll would now be if Aggie had invested it for him. Around a quarter-million dollars, Aggie told him.

Aggie admits that prior to going with rookie Jones, he tried very hard to sign up young Foyt. What does he look for in a driver? "Basic things," J. C. says. "Natural physical ability, desire, a strong heart and a good head. Jones had all of these things. He's a very serious boy. In contrast to Troy, Parnelli has made the most of what he has. More than I once did, I now look for the solid citizen type," the super-scout points out.

"If it's true there is one driver who's best for every track, Parnelli has picked a dandy in Indianapolis, he just hasn't been very lucky there. He wouldn't drive there until he'd studied the race a couple of years and was sure he was ready and had good equipment. And he'll take advice. Not many people know that as a rookie Jones so impressed Mauri Rose that Rose offered to coach Parnelli. The three of us sat down in my garage for three hours while Mauri passed on to Parnelli everything he had learned in racing, particularly in the 500.

"Parnelli is just a real solid person, a gentleman, a credit to racing. His word is his bond. He likes to enjoy life, but he doesn't tear around. He has a good marriage and I think when he retires, he and his wife will adopt a child. He's saved a lot of money and has made some sound investments. He's asked my advice a number of times and I have tried to help him. We are partners in a real-estate proposition now. When he

retires, his future will be assured."

Clearly, J. C. has a way with a buck, a talent he inherited from his immigrant father. The Agajansians are not unlike characters out of a William Saroyan novel. James T. Agajanian fled Armenia with his wife Hamas to escape the Army draft and arrived in Los Angeles just in time for Joshua James to be born June 16, 1913. They had two other sons, Ben, who became a prominent professional football place-kicker, and Eli, and two daughters, Zerma and Jackie.

**S**OMETIME IN childhood, Joshua James picked up and began to use the nickname "Jacie." On his first day in high school, his new teacher, segregating her class by sex from the roll book, sent "Jacie" to line up with the girls. As his buddies howled, an embarrassed "Jacie" switched to the initials "J. C." on the spot.

The senior Agajanian, who never had a day's schooling and could not speak a word of English when he arrived in this country, picked up the language by comparing Armenian and English bibles and went to work as a dishwasher in the Alexandria Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. One day he curiously asked the garbage man what he did with his collections and was told they went to feed pigs. So was born a fortune.

For five years, he saved his money and in 1919 he went into the garbage-collection and hog-raising business in Saugus, Calif. He started small, but the economics of the operation were sound and the business prospered and expanded to San Pedro, Gardena and other locations. As J. C. got older, he began to help his father and gradually assumed control. Brother Eli has participated, too. A few years back, the Agajansians sold their hog farms, but retained the land under them and the garbage-collection business.

Naturally, the hog and garbage business lacks a basic beauty, as has been pointed out to J. C. over the years. He laughs off insults. "It was very profitable in the long run, it's an honest business and I'm not ashamed of it."

J. C. has invested his money successfully, mainly in real estate, partly in the stock market. The Agajansians live in a 2-story, 20-room circular Colonial house they built 15 years ago, and drive new cars each year.

J. C. married Faye Stepanian in 1932. His mother and her mother were raised together, their families came to this country at about the same time, and J. C. and Faye were born one house apart, a few months apart. They have had four children: Joan, 26; Cary, 22; J. C. Jr., 16, and Chris, 14.

Joan, a schoolteacher, is married to John Quinn, an attorney. Cary is a USC law student, J. C. Jr. is in high school and Chris in military school. Now that her children are growing up, the remark-

able Mrs. Agajanian has been attending college in quest of a teaching degree.

J. C., who graduated from San Pedro High and attended junior college for awhile, is quite proud of the upper-crust education afforded his heirs and the solid circumstances he has provided for them.

"We are able to live quite comfortably," he points out modestly "Papa,

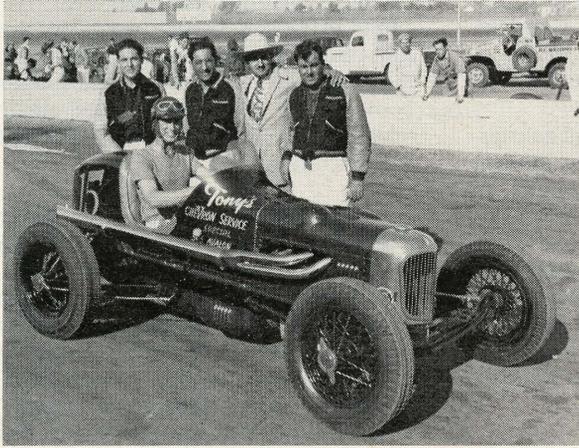
who is 72 now, doesn't have to work, but he helps out in the office mornings before going home to Mama. The boys are responsible lads and help out at the track, selling tickets and programs and things like that."

It has been said that Agajanian "owns Gardena." "I would not go that far," Aggie grins. "We do own a lot of property in Gardena and elsewhere. If you

ask me how much money I have, I really couldn't tell you. Much of it is tied up in investments. I would not want to say I had 4½ million if it turned out I didn't have that much."

Clearly, none of the Agajanians will be going on relief.

Aggie caught the racing bug as a boy. He hung around the old Legion Ascot Speedway and drove in some hot-rod

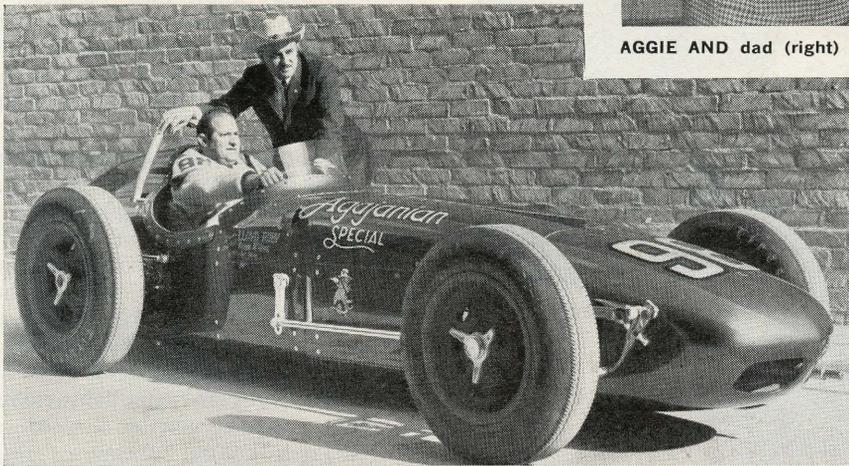


WALT WOESTMAN

EARLY DAYS at South Ascot: Aggie, flanked by Louis and Sam Nigro, with Slim Mathis in car. Sam was J. C.'s first race driver.



AGGIE AND dad (right) toast Chuck Stevenson after a racing victory.



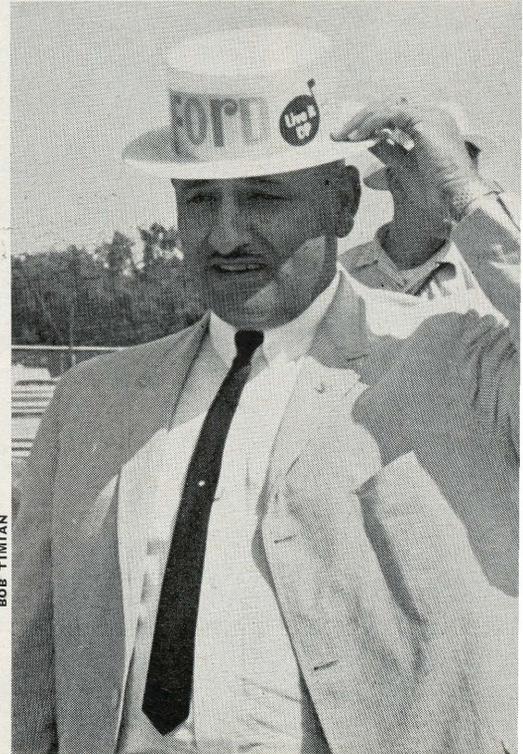
WINNINGEST "98" built: Twice won pole, led race four times, winner of 500 once.



PARNELLI JONES, winner in '63, and sponsor J. C. Agajanian.

PROPHETIC HAT was tried on in '63; Aggie will have a Ford-Lotus in the '65 event.

PROMOTER AGAJANIAN at work, signing up drivers (l-r) Paul Goldsmith, Tony Bettenhausen and Parnelli Jones for one of his events.



BOB TIMIAN

# AGGIE

aces, but couldn't get a ride in a real racing car, so decided to buy his own car, a sprinter, from Hal Cole.

"I told a little white lie," Aggie has confessed. "I told our family banker that my father was out of town, but we needed \$1500. He gave it to me. I bought the car and put it in Dad's garage. And I was polishing it like mad when Dad came home."

Dad was, to put it mildly, upset. He suggested that if J. C. wished to pursue a racing career, he had only to move out of house and home and change his name. "Well, I was driving a new Chevy con-

vertible, I had spending money and things were pretty good at home. Frankly, I didn't want to leave. Besides, kids in those days weren't nearly as independent as they are now," he laughs.

He talked his father into letting him keep the car and even into footing some of the bills—an early example of J. C. super-salesmanship—but had to promise not to drive himself. His father was sure he'd tire of the novelty and return to the family profession full-time, but he was wrong. When J. C. got unhappy with the promoters of the time, he formed his own racing association in 1936 and within a year was himself promoting races.

At Ascot Park's half-mile and quarter-mile tracks, he promotes every kind of racing, including motorcycle racing. In fact, he is proudest of this. "When I went into it, the sport had a bad name and people were afraid of the black-leather-jacket, gold-earring bunch. No one thought I could make a go of it. Well, it's been a tremendous success. The racing is high quality, the kids are

very well-behaved and we draw big crowds of substantial citizens."

The California Racing Association, a top-level sprint-car group which has produced countless Indianapolis stars, operates regularly at Ascot. Aggie also brings in USAC stars for sprint and midget races and promotes events at such places as San Jose, Sacramento, San Bernardino, Fresno and Phoenix.

He has been sponsoring the Phoenix and Sacramento 100-mile big-car events annually and runs the Pikes Peak Hill Climb in Colorado each year. He also runs charter flights to the 500 and landed the contract for half of the area's arena bookings for this year's closed-circuit telecast of the event. Sam Hanks landed the other half.

**H**ANKS MIGHT be a rival to Agajanian if he can ever land the financing for a multi-million-dollar modern Indianapolis-styled racing plant for a Labor Day 500 and other major events, either near Pomona or Anaheim, about an hour from Los Angeles. "I've been interested in such a proposition myself," J. C. admits, "but the money men I've spoken to have determined that such a \$20-25 million plan is not economically feasible. They know their business, I respect them and have to go along with them. I don't think it will ever get off the ground. But if Hanks does pull it off, more power to him, it would be good for racing."

At the moment, Aggie's sternest racing opposition in Southern California comes from Riverside International Raceway, which does not compete on a regular, weekly basis, but has been putting on some outstanding shows including the Grand Prix-styled Riverside 500 and a big NASCAR 500 and may even sponsor a USAC big-car championship event if there are enough rear-engine lightweights available and they can be adapted to the road-styled course. "The more racing there is, the better it is for racing," Aggie says. "I'm not really in competition with them right now, but if I ever am, fine."

Agajanian says that his success in racing is due to the fact that "I never try to fool the public. I do not advertise fellows who are not going to run, and if a fellow has to pull out, I let the public know. We try to give racing people a safe operation and racing fans a good show. Everyone gets their money's worth. The car-owner and promoter is no villain and I do my darndest to prove it every day of my life."

Clearly, the grinning Armenian will be waving his 10-gal. hat over No. 98 cars for years to come, in good years and bad, through good luck and bad, spreading color and controversy in his wake. From such modest acorns as garbage and hogs, a checkered flag has grown. ■

J. C. AGAJANIAN: A lasting enthusiasm for auto racing.



ROBERT P. TRONOLONE