



- Born August 19, 1950, in Salinas, California

- One of California's best. A popular, hard-driving, professional racer from a famous racing family who captured more than 200 wins in all types of competition, sits in multiple halls of fame, and paid for it all by constructing beautiful and lightning fast machinery.

## As told to **Lew Boyd**

**M**arshall Sargent was a strong man and a big winner with a unique driving style. He raced everywhere, but sure put on some shows back here in California with guys like Al Pombo. He was also my dad.

I saw a lot of it. I've been at a racetrack almost every Saturday night since I was born. My grandmother could only watch one son while Dad and Mom were off racing, so I got to go with them, while brother Mark stayed home. We'd be at the track early, and I'd play with the sons of Dad's competitors. We all became friends. Later in life many of us raced, so you could say my networking started early.

Dad taught me everything growing up about racing and life, but he probably wondered at one point whether he should have taught me to weld. You see, sometimes he'd

# Mike Sargent

## *In His Own Words*

go to Australia in the winter to race. In 1966, when I was 16, just in high school, he was Down Under, and my buddies and I decided to put a stock car together. We just rolled it into the garage, and I did some serious cutting and welding. When he came back, he was furious about seeing another car sitting in his stall. But he watched us for a while and said, "Okay, I'll help."

When it was done, we all went down to the quarter-mile dirt in Watsonville, California. I set a track record. I was young and cocky. I expected it of myself, given the family I came from. But Dad and his buddies were dumbfounded. They began mentoring me, to make me understand that races are won in the shop and to calm down on the track.

My dad did all kinds of racing, even NASCAR Cup and the 12 Hours of Daytona. But in California, it was the super-modifieds, and he was on top. These were rail-frame cars with small blocks and six deuces. But in 1968 at San Jose, in a mishap from a stuck throttle, he was badly hurt and had to take time off. Mom and Dad tried other drivers in the car, but it didn't work out. "If we have to have a school bus to take guys to the track, we might as well put Mike in it," they decided. So, off we went to Kearney Bowl.

I'll never forget that. I crashed big time. But it wasn't for a throttle problem. I learned to always drill and pin my linkage after Dad's incident. What happened was that, on the first lap, I ran it down into one and went for the brake. But, in a center steer car, the throttle is on one side, the brake and clutch on the other. I hit the clutch and deposited the car right into the wall. You don't realize you can be hurt until you crash.

Dad never said anything when something like that happened. He'd just ask me, "What did you learn? Why did you crash?" If I couldn't tell him, he would tell me.

About this time, I was signing autographs and a girl I had kinda known since fifth grade walked up. Her name was JoAnn Sanseverino, and I signed with my phone number. We have now been married for 51 years.

**WehrsMachine.com**




<b>CONTROL ARM BOLTS</b>	<b>LOAD STICKS</b>	<b>BUMP TUNER</b>	<b>PULL BARS</b>
			
<b>SPRING ALIGNMENT</b>	<b>BUMP STICKS</b>	<b>RUBBER PICK</b>	<b>SHOCK MOUNTS</b>
			
<b>SPRING STEEL COIL KEEPER</b>	<b>877.460.7211</b>		<b>SUSPENSION CAGES</b>
	1710 Pearl Street   Bangor, WI   54814		
<b>#BilletTrickery</b>			




**NEW FLORESCENT COLOR CHROME WHEELS**





**Flo Orange**

**Flo Pink**

**Flo Yellow**

888-895-2376 | [www.aeroracewheels.com](http://www.aeroracewheels.com)

Ignorance Hurts. Ignorance Kills.



Visit [www.getstartedracing.com](http://www.getstartedracing.com) for a friendly, no-sales-pressure environment to learn what you need to know before you strap in.

[www.getstartedracing.com](http://www.getstartedracing.com)

Be aware to prepare

## VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

Dad was going with me a lot when he was recuperating. He made me run in different associations, on different tracks, and with different drivers. He was so good with handling. One night we'd be on asphalt, the next on dirt. He had his ways to adjust to the surfaces, such as putting the left side shocks on the right and vice versa. I got my first super win at Roseville in 1971, a major accomplishment. They came more easily afterwards, two to three a year and then five or more.

My mom's advice would really help out, too. I was making a few bucks as a dishwasher, but she was unimpressed. She urged me to do something that offered useful skills. I became a machinist working on racing engines. I learned a lot, but I quit because I couldn't get to the races on Friday night.

My next weekday job lasted much longer. I became a carpenter, doing all kinds of work, from houses to major construction sites. Like with machining, it was really useful, because I was already beginning to work more on race cars. Carpentry gave me a much better understanding about how to go about a complicated project.

I began to win a lot. I'm not sure how many, because few records were kept, especially in open-competition events. I decided to go East, as Dad had done, but I took my super. In the early 1970s we went to Ohio and actually ran well. Our California car was nothing like the Eastern supers, though it handled great. We won at Lorrain County. There was a close one on another night. I remember leading when along came Bentley Warren. He had blown his engine earlier. No one could believe it when he won after stuffing the engine full of rags and oil.

We weren't exactly over-funded. I remember getting to Toledo a couple of days before the race, pretty much broke. The promoter found us sleeping in the pit shack. He suggested we build him a new one. So we did, and he put us up in the Marriott.

I did have two good car owners along the way, but to be honest, I preferred running stuff we built ourselves. So I began taking on work for other racers in our

shop. It took off with "Sargent Chassis," but I never actually formed a real business. I just answered the phone and built whatever people needed—sports cars, midjets, anything. By 1980, many racing components were being mass-produced, and I found myself working closely with manufacturers. I was always using the best materials for my customers, and they sure helped paying for my own racing.

For a while, the supers and sprint cars were running together, but over time the supers couldn't keep up. In 1986, I got in a Trostle sprinter at Calistoga and flew out of the place. They had to cut me out of the trees. I was messed up pretty good, and have little memory of two months of sheet time. There never was a fear factor. JoAnn and my dad knew that, and they urged me not to race sprinters in the future. They knew I was just too brave.

I kept racing until 1990, when Dad died. It made a big impression on me. I was 40 then, and Dad had told me that I had to do other things with my life besides just race. There is no way I was going to keep going until I got beat. I won five races that year before I quit.

A big part of my life has been my family and my sons Marshall and Kirk. They've raced, too, and I started them both out in sprint cars I built for them. Kirk took a special liking to it and won his first event at 16. He went on to race happily for 12 years.

I have continued in the shop on all kinds of projects. One of the best ones was when Kenny Shepherd of Madera Speedway asked me to build a replica NASCAR super following '70s-era San Jose rules. It was fun to build it—and is it ever fast. I recently went over to a vintage event at Meridian Speedway in Boise, Idaho, climbed in, and won big time.

I'm enjoying life, sitting here in Kirk's place on the ocean. It is too bad to see the supers in decline at the moment, but my feeling is that overall racing will be all right. It won't always be what we are used to—those tuner cars today don't look like open-wheelers—but, it is racing! 🏆