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INTRODUCTION

Hot Rods were well known in the Sixties around the suburbs of Melbourne. The youth of the time did not have many outdoor activities, but Hot Rodding seemed to strike favouritism with many. Inspirations would come from American Magazines. Working on cars alongside friends with common interests, this is how the Hot Rod era in Melbourne was started.

Melbourne is the capital city of Victoria, Australia and is located on the eastern seaboard, but at the southern end. The Sixties saw Melbourne grow rapidly as an urban city with many housing estates sprawling in all directions.

While there may have been small groups of Rodders around Melbourne there were no real Clubs until the Southern Hot Rod Club (SHRC) was first started in 1956. The Eagles Club and the Rockers both started in 1960. The Rockers club became the Thunderbirds in 1963. Hot Rod enthusiasts would attend small shows at Petrol Stations or Car Yards. The biggest attraction in Melbourne for Hot Rodders was the Riverside Drag Races between 1962 and 1966. This event occurred at Fishermans Bend, down by the Yarra River in Melbourne and was run on the first Sunday of every month. The regularity of running every month meant that the youth would look forward to attending and seeing fast cars and meeting with friends. These meetings would encourage friendships and be the making of Hot Rod builders.

The photos within this book are as they were taken. Perfect photos were not really possible due to the camera equipment available and to only include the best photos would exclude some of the history contained here. All photos were taken by Mick Dunne (except where noted by Doug Wilson), during the early Sixties.

Many of us have taken photos over the years but we are all starting to forget where it was taken and when. This is my first book to try to preserve some of that history while we can still document and collate it. There will undoubtedly be some mistakes in the ownership of the Hot Rods or the descriptions but we have to start somewhere.

I was inspired to write this book after reading “Images of America - Spokane Hot Rodding” by John Gunsaulis. What a great collection. I really hope you enjoy the pictures and words describing each Hot Rod, Custom or Dragster in our book, “Hot Rods of the Sixties in Melbourne”

Ken Murphy
CHAPTER 1: EARLY RODDING OF MICK DUNNE

The photos in this book are mostly taken by Mick Dunne of Melbourne who was an active follower of the Rodding scene in the sixties.

Mick started his first Hot Rod build in 1960 at his family home in Balwyn (an eastern suburb of Melbourne). At age 12 Mick was a student at Box Hill Tech where he hung out with friends Doug Wilson and Ian Smith. Doug had access to American Hot Rod magazines and would share the content with his friends. All of these guys became hooked on the idea of building and owning a Hot Rod.

Mick’s first Hot Rod was a 1927 T Model Ford pickup that was purchased in Essendon. Mick had the car for 40 years and never finished it simply because other preferred projects came along. The T Model was followed by his first ’32 Roadster that he purchased from Peter Large of Surrey Hills for five pounds. He proceeded to build this rod as a canary yellow Hi-Boy. At the time (early sixties) everyone else was still building channelled Rods. Hasn’t that trend changed and Mick has never wanted to follow trends right to this day. Then came a ’37 Ford Cabriolet and an A Model channelled Roadster followed by many more Rods after that.

The Hot Rod that Mick is most associated with is the old Ray Charlton ’32 Roadster called “Yellow Fever”. This Rod was bought by Ray as an unfinished channelled car, which he finished as the “Yellow Fever” Rod. Ray did sell it and the Rod went through about nine other owners before Mick purchased it. Mick used it for about a year in its current form but soon realised that the chassis
was totally worn out. To fix the chassis Mick took the Rod off the road and fully rebuilt the car using a ’34 chassis. His mate Doug Wilson, repainted the Rod in Cyan Blue. It stayed that way for a couple of years and then the car was T-Boned and needed another full rebuild. The Rod was painted black and the motor replaced with a Chevrolet. Mick owned the Rod for about 28 years and drove his Rod all over Australia. On one trip he was in Esperance, Western Australia, and was ordered by the cops to get out of town, because they had never seen a Rod before.

Mick dumped the Rod scene in the late seventies as he could not go to a Rod event without 10 or so onlookers asking him, “Why don’t you make it into a Hi-Boy like everyone else?” So Mick got together with 20 or so mates with the same taste in traditional Rods and formed the Prowlers Car Club. They did their own thing very happily.

Mick has always been into Classic American Cars and has had some very rare ones including many convertibles. His favourite Classic was a 1956 Buick Century he bought in 1970. It was painted red with a white top. Mick still has a few Classics including a ’55 Thunderbird and a ’Vette to name a few. He is currently putting the finishing touches to his ’34 Ford Pickup, which is early Sixties style of course.
CHAPTER 2: ON THE STREET

The 1960s in Melbourne saw many young drivers building Hot-Rods. Avid rodders would visit car yards and each other’s homes to gather news of the latest builds underway. Hot Rods were being built in backyards, front yards and if you were lucky in a garage. Styles were influenced by magazines, typically from the USA depicting the scene and activity there. Hot Rod projects usually started as cast offs from the car yards of the day where dealers didn’t want to hang on to these outdated models. Fortunately for Hot-Rod fans these cars were to become an ideal project.

This chapter captures some of the Hot Rods on the streets of Melbourne. Identification of some of the cars and their owners for this chapter was not possible since the cars were seen on the street and simply snapped by camera while in the area.

Improved A Ford Roadster, (Plate: GPN-595), Black with white soft top and Sidevalve motor. Note the Vanguard van in front. Owner: Unknown. Location: small car yard in Auburn. Photo By: Mick Dunne. Early ’60s
1933-34 Ford Coupe (5 Window), (Plate: GHA-197), Painted in red oxide primer with '59 Plymouth hubcaps. Owner: Unknown. Location: Whitehorse Road, Deepdene at the Auto Electrical shop. Photo By: Mick Dunne. Early '60s

1936 Ford Coupe, (Plate: HAY-987), Painted black with red scallops, '48 Ford front fenders with front fenders also being added to the rear. Car is channelled with Sidevalve engine. Owner: Vin Prideaux. Location: Coventry Street, South Melbourne. Photo By: Mick Dunne. Early '60s
1937 Ford Coupe, (Plate: 49-416), This Coupe spotted in the streets is a very Customised Car. Painted black, with many modifications including a partially filled grille, twin headlights and bumperettes added. Owner: Unknown. Location: Johnston Street, Collingwood. Photo By: Mick Dunne. 1964

1937 Ford Coupe, (Plate: 49-416), Rear photo of this car shows the continued customisation of tail lights, cut in number plate, bumperettes and whitewall tyres. There is a ’61 Holden taxi in background. Owner: Unknown. Location: Johnston Street, Collingwood. Photo By: Mick Dunne. 1964

1932 Ford Roadster, (Plate: HLN-257), Another photo of previous car. Owner: Barry Smith. Location: Barry’s backyard in Union Road, Surrey Hills. Photo By: Mick Dunne. 1963
1934 Ford Roadster, Not too many details on this one except that it was built in the 1950s Owner was a member of Southern Hot Rod Club. Owner: Murray Richards. Location: Richmond. Photo By: Doug Wilson. 1959-60

1935 Plymouth Roadster, (Plate: HNH-956), black with chrome ’32 truck grille, six cylinder flathead Dodge motor with triple carbs, nerf bars and a roll bar. Car was previously owned by Norm Yates. Owner: Henry Unknown. Location: Richmond. Photo By: Mick Dunne. 1962-63