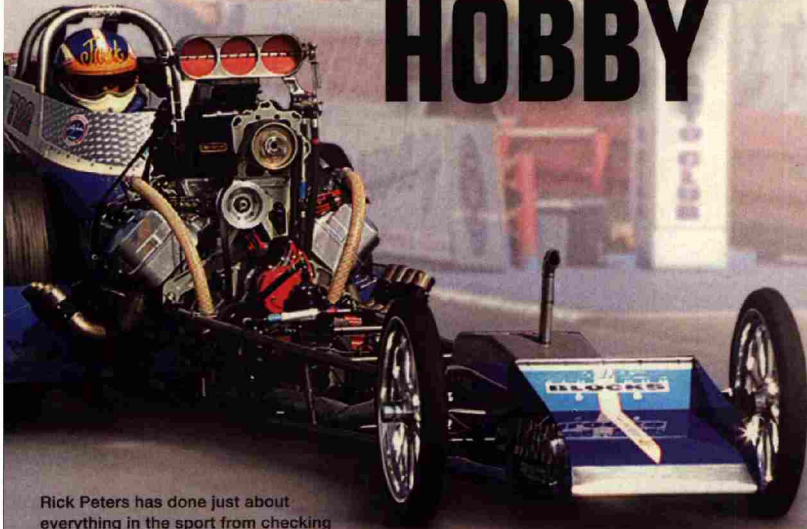


After HOURS

HIGH-OCTANE HOBBY



Rick Peters has done just about everything in the sport from checking dragster maintenance to financial backing to racing to building dragsters.

1968. His three daughters, now adults, have also embraced the motor sport. Son-in-law Randy Vasquez is a Paso Posse crew member.

His first drag race was in 1967, the same year he and his brother, Steve Peters of HQT Homes, assembled a dragster together. Peters became involved in the real estate industry three years later when he joined Fieldstone, where he worked alongside two-time NHRA Top Fuel champion Gary Beck.

Peters and Beck's relationship didn't end when the two retired from the company in 2007 and 2008, respectively. Beck has served as co-crew chief for Paso Posse, which for the last four-and-a-half years has competed in the NHRA Heritage series. NHRA ranked Beck number 24 on its list of

By day, Rick Peters heads a real estate consulting firm. But off hours—and especially between March and October—you'll find him at various racetracks, traveling cross-country with his racing team, Paso Posse Top Fuel Dragster.

Peters, president of Huntington Beach-based R.E. Peters Co., says there is common ground between running a company and keeping a race team healthy: teamwork; raising money and watching the bottom line; and relationship-building.

"I've always believed that in any business deal you do, it starts with people," Peters said just before his team headed to Las Vegas in late October to participate in the National Hot Rod Association's Heritage series. In the real estate business, it's about "partnerships with key trade contractors and cities. In racing it's similar with partnerships and with sponsors."

Peters has an interesting background. For 27 years, he held top posts at the California arm of Fieldstone Communities Inc., and during his tenure oversaw the design, construction and warranty of some 12,000 homes. Peters also served as a board member with the Home Builders Council of Southern California, and he co-managed one of the Southern California's largest Habitat for Humanity projects.

Although he describes drag racing as "more of a hobby," it's been a part of his life for more than 30 years. Aside from being a former driver, he has sponsored and co-owned several race car teams.

It's a part of family lore, too. The first two dates with his wife, Patty, were to watch the drag races at the Irwindale Speedway in

most influential drag racers. The 14-category series was created to honor and preserve the nostalgia of hot rod racing. "It's just a great way to relive the days when we raced professionally in the NHRA circuit," Peters says. "It brings people together."

Running a team is also an expensive endeavor. Peters says his major sponsors are companies from within the real estate industry interested in the sport and in reaching the coveted 18- to 34-year-old demographic. The team's sponsor is John Roderick, a Paso Robles resident who created the forged aluminum engine blocks used in today's top fuel cars.

Peters declined to disclose how much he invests in Paso Posse every year, but he says, "There is an investment that's more than monetary. It's an investment of friendships, relationships and time with good friends."

The executive contributes a lot to the team, says Henry Walther, a longtime friend whose association with Peters goes back nearly 30 years in the racing circuit. Walther was a crew member of the Larry Minor team, which in 1983 recorded 16 out of the season's 17 quickest runs. Walther recalls he offered Peters a place in the team a few years ago when he began to notice Peters' frequent race attendance, adding that "it was apparent his love for the races hasn't subsided."

"Rick brings many talents to our race team," Walther says. "He can jump right in and work on any job on the race car, but the talents that stand out are his management and promotional skills. He is the type of guy who can take a group of people and turn them into a true team."—*Samantha Gonzaga*—SOCAL

