

Hot Rod LINCOLN

The world's fastest over-the-road Lincoln is one wild stock car.
It fits the guy who owns and drives it perfectly.



When Dick Anderson painted "Ve Loz Viejos" on his '54 Lincoln before heading for the Mexican Road Race, he knew it could be taken two ways. Taken literally, the clever play on words means "Look at the old men." But when the first two words are run together, it becomes "Fast Old Men."

No doubt, Dick Anderson—the man behind Carrera Shocks, the original

story and photography by
Mike Adaskaveg



Daytona racing parts trade show and a big smile—sees himself as fast. Maybe others see him as too fast. He hardly got to victory lane in the bizarre race, in which cars hurtle over Mexican roads without speed limits, before he found his stuff being outlawed. Perhaps it's understandable: Only one '54 Lincoln can run 2000 miles of bad road at an average speed of 158.2 mph.



In 1955, at the age of sixteen, Anderson fulfilled a boyhood dream by attending a version of the original *Carrera Panamericana* (Mexican Road Race). He went home empty, however; the race was canceled.

Eventually, Anderson tried his hand at Midwest modified driving, then settled down to run a company he named after the only Spanish word his partner understood—*carrera*. Or, in English, *race*.

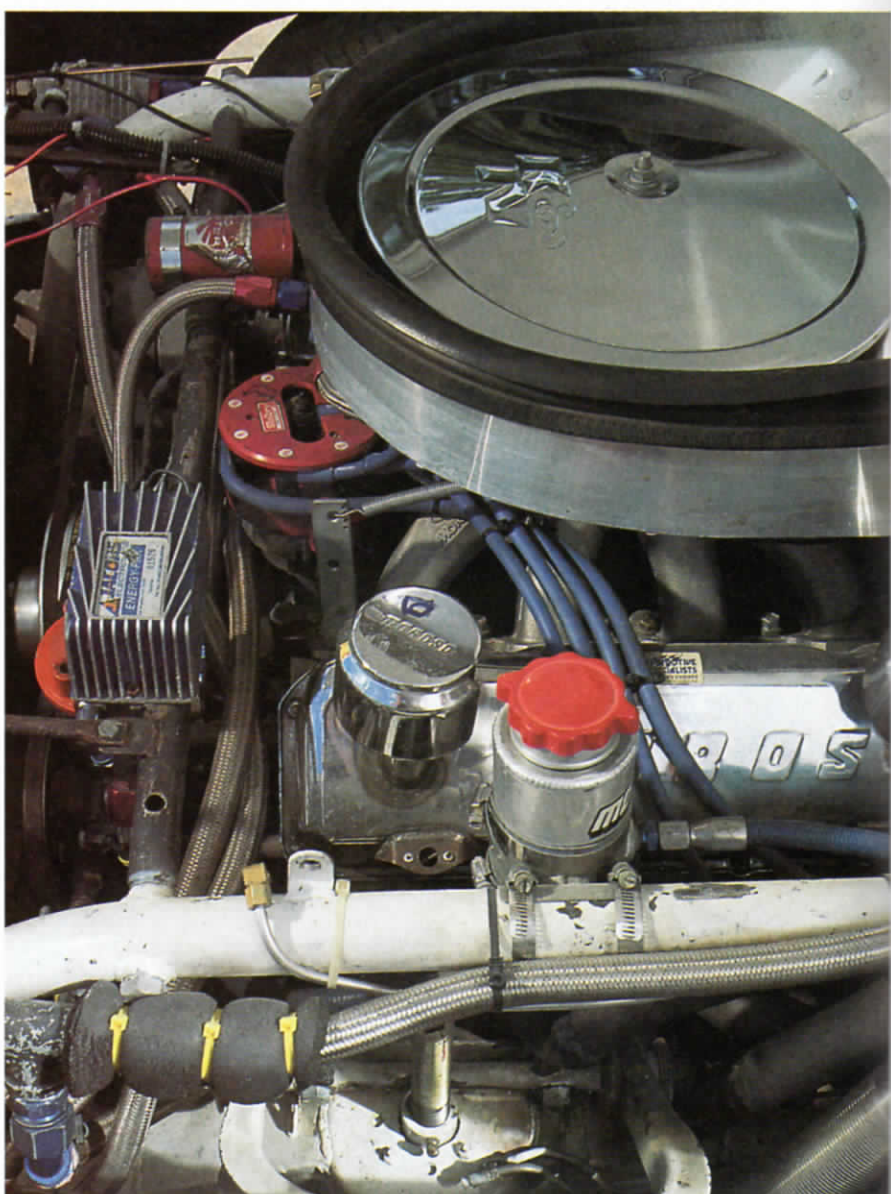
They built sprint cars for a few years before moving on to the shock absorbers his company is now famous for.

"I anguished for 28 years about being born a year too late," Anderson explained. "Then, one day in 1988, the receptionist told me some guy was in

Dick Anderson and his famous Lincoln pose on the back roads of Georgia. Note that he's included a plug for then President Eisenhower on the hood of the car.



Anderson's not above a little tongue-in-cheek trash talk.



Up front, the Lincoln looks like racing. The air induction is the same style that's used in Winston Cup and the engine was built by Keith Dorton, who builds Winston Cup engines. How else could anyone get a '54 Lincoln to go 180 MPH?

the office looking for some shocks for a '54 Lincoln he was going to race in the Mexican Road Race. When I heard that, I got so excited I jumped over my desk."

The Mexican Road Race had been resurrected. Anderson quickly got on the phone to share the good news with his buddy, Jack McCoy, the all-time winner in the NASCAR Grand National West division.

"Jack said, 'Let's go and watch,'" Anderson recalled. "I said, 'Hell, let's go and race!'"

There was one small problem. The race was just weeks away, and Anderson wanted to enter a very special car: a 1954 Lincoln Capri. Since Lincolns had dominated the event in 1952, '53, and '54, Anderson felt it was only fitting to start where he—and the race—had left off. "I was going to carry on the tradition and make Lincoln come back even bigger," Anderson explained, "but we only had four weeks to do it in."

McCoy tried to find a car by putting the word out all over the country. He called to place an ad in *Hemmings*, a monthly publication that's nothing but ads—most of them for antique cars, some of them historic racing cars. But McCoy found that his ad wouldn't be out until two days before the race.

Anderson was prepared to build a car, but he needed something to start with. He called everyone he knew, but could not find a '54 Lincoln. The prospects looked bleak. Then the guy who'd come in for the shocks a few weeks earlier called to say he'd spotted a '54 Lincoln just a few miles from Carrera headquarters in Atlanta. Anderson had himself a car.

McCoy helped Anderson throw a "mild" '351 Cleveland under the hood, build a solid roll cage, and stuff a Grand National rear under the trunk. They added late model Lincoln spindles with disc brakes, serious seat belts, a 44-gallon fuel cell, and they were ready to go racing.

"We took 700 pounds of upholstery out of the car and had it 'race ready' at 5,000 pounds," Anderson chuckled. "Needless to say, we didn't have a chance before we left Atlanta. We went to Mexico to race anyway, and we made every mistake possible. But we had fun and we learned."

Anderson learned how to run the all-important rally portion of the event the hard way. He got to the second checkpoint an hour and 45 minutes faster than the record, and 40 minutes before the officials got there. Then he found

out that he wasn't supposed to go flat-out the whole distance. To win the overall event, fast cars that could dominate the race stretches of the course needed to score perfect in the rally portions.

Anderson's first outing was a short one. The heavy Lincoln's engine blew on the fourth day of the week-long event. "We were going down a mountain road at 120 when the engine let go. We coasted five miles into the town of Queretaro in search of two things—a garage to install a new engine and a beer to cool us down," Anderson recalled. "When we coasted into town,

our dreams were answered. There was a garage with three young Mexican mechanics who were thrilled to work on our car, and right across the street was a tavern."

Anderson had the guys install his spare engine, but it wasn't competitive. "When we came back [to Atlanta], we completely gutted the car, and then proceeded to build a race car," Anderson said. "The car came completely apart, and all the parts were thrown away or lightened. It looked the same on the outside, but come race day it weighed in at 3,022 pounds."



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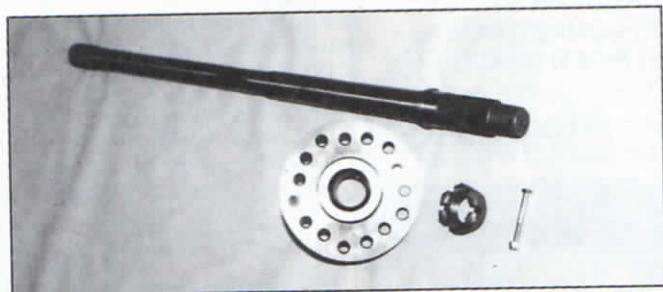
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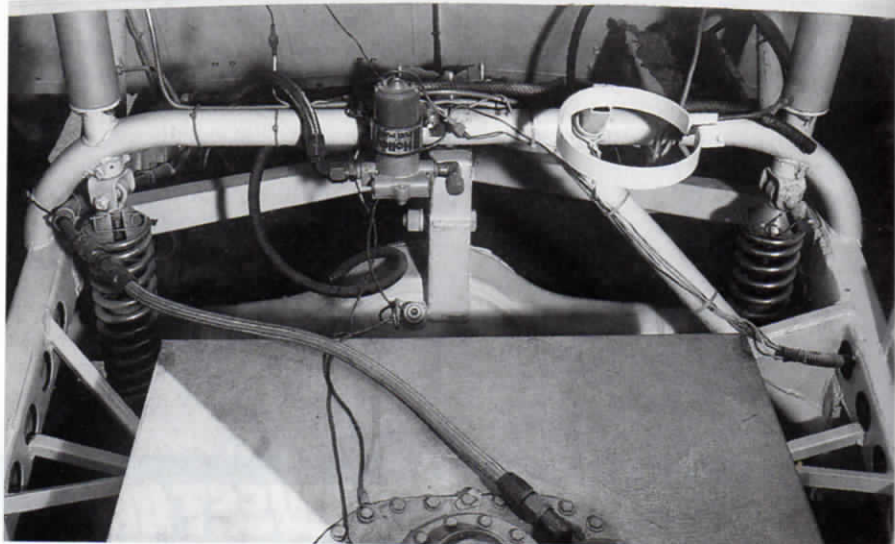
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The hot rod Lincoln will never win a "best appearing" award at an auto show. The 9" Ford Winston Cup rear end was built by Stock Car Products and is on a three-point system. Carrera coil-overs were never found on a factory stock '54 Lincoln, but they're here. Note also that the Lincoln's rear frame rails have been replaced by a racing clip. The fuel cell holds 44 gallons of racing gas, enough to get between checkpoints.

In 1989, the leaner, meaner Lincoln—in many ways it was a Winston Cup car that just looked like an old Mexican Road Race car—was ready to devour the competition. Anderson enlisted copilot Diego Febles of Puerto Rico to navigate. But promoter Eduardo Leon did not like what he saw. "Deeck, I verry, verrrry, worried about you," he said. "You gonna keeel yourself. You better

take it eeasy the first day, or I will deeesqualify you."

Of course, Anderson knew it was just a scare tactic. No Mexican promoter would want an American to win on Mexican soil. So, he just put the pedal down and came in seventh in the field of 120 cars on the first day.

On the fifth day, he was running in first. But that didn't last long. "We had a

Not a Show Car

Dick Anderson's Lincoln is in many ways similar to a Winston Cup car. The Keith Dorton engine is built around a Fontana aluminum block with SVO-Yates heads. Up front is a racing Griffin aluminum radiator and inside are a Moldex crank, Wiseco pistons and a Reed cam—all the Winston Cup stuff. Anderson is especially high on his Jacobs ignition system, which he claims to have found good for eight HP in back-to-back dyno testing when compared to another popular ignition system.

The engine is set up for very high RPM, so much so that maximum horsepower arrives at 7900 RPM. Anderson claims that he will "usually shift at 8500 RPM" during the race portions of the course. When he

does, he uses a Quartermaster three-disc stock car racing clutch that connects to two Jerico transmissions. Anderson has mated a Jerico two-speed with a four-speed to have eight available forward speed gears, of which he uses five. Before he added the two-speed to the four-speed, low was a 100 MPH gear.

The rear is a 9" Winston Cup Ford from Stock Car Products. All springs and shocks are Carrera, of course, with the front setup stock appearing. The rear is coil-over. Big ball joints were added up front along with custom spindles by Mittler Brothers.

A full roll cage and engine bay bracing make the car look very Winston Cup, but only from a distance. As was the case with the origi-

The Mexican Road Race

The Mexican Road Race is like no other stock car race in the world. For one thing, it's run over open highways where there are no grandstands and little crowd control. Fans—millions of them by Dick Anderson's estimate—stand directly on the side of the highway, with no guardrails or fences between them and the speeding cars. "If they had their choice," says Anderson, "they'd touch the cars as we go by." Every day, there's a rally portion of the event in which speeds are relatively slow, but there's also a race portion. Anderson's strategy is simple: run a perfect rally segment and be fastest in the road race portion.

Each day, the event breaks at midday for a noon stop during which there's lunch and a beer. "Including for the driver, of course," Anderson explains. The event is sponsored by a beer company and nobody seems to much worry about drivers racing in the afternoon after a beer at lunch. "You stop the car, they hand you a beer," says Anderson.

The cars run 300 miles a day, of which only 10-30 miles are actual racing. In all, the event consumes seven days and covers 2,000 miles over mountains, through towns and some of the most attractive scenery south of the US.

It's the race portion that is so difficult and so attractive. "You come around a corner at 150 and there's a cow," says Anderson. There are no caution lights or corner workers with caution flags. If anything has gone wrong, the drivers have no idea there's trouble ahead.

Between the high potential for crashes and mechanical failure, the Mexican Road Race requires enormous courage and a support team to run ahead of the race car. Anderson uses two crews, one of which tows a trailer full of spares, including an engine, transmission, rear end, tires, fuel and almost everything else his hot rod Lincoln might need. Because support trucks are not allowed to run with the cars, they leave early in the day in order to arrive at the noon break-point with fuel. Anderson carries 44 gallons, which is enough to run each leg.

This is anything but a relaxing drive through the country. On the first day, going from Tuxtla Gutierrez to Oaxaca, there are 3000 turns—and, according to Anderson, "not ten guardrails." It's run through mountains with sharp curves and steep drop-offs awaiting those who make a mistake. Top speed Anderson has attained in this most dangerous part of the course is 182 MPH.

—Dick Berggren

mountain pass, and Gael was reading his pace notes, which he got from his cousin," Anderson recalled. "I saw a mountain on the left and I knew there was a turn behind a rise in the road ahead.

"He said, 'Full to right,' which means full throttle, a slight right turn ahead. But when I hit the next gear and topped the rise at 120 MPH, I could see a 90 degree left turn and a cliff on the right! There was lots of screeching and horizon scanning, and then we backed into the mountain hard about 150 yards from where we began skidding. Miraculously, we lived to tell the story."

The crew did a lot of parts straightening after the crash, but Anderson felt he didn't have the faith in the parts to race hard with them, so he called it quits.

These days, Dick Anderson's hot rod Lincoln isn't as welcome in Mexico as he would like it to be. That's one of the rea-

sons why he sat out the '94 race. "They changed the rules for us every year for the last five years," he explained. "Whatever I have becomes illegal the next year. I built five motors in five years because of rules changes. They've changed the transmission specs three times. Last year, both my motor and transmission were illegal again."

Anderson parked the Lincoln to rethink his commitment to the race and to see what direction it would take in 1995. He's entered the car in some vintage races around the country, but there's a speed limit in those events. His heart remains south of the border, and if the rules stabilize in the Mexican Road Race, he'll run again.

"I haven't ruled out returning to the Mexican Road Race," Anderson summarized. "I may be a gringo, but I'm a fast old man, just like that '54 Lincoln." 