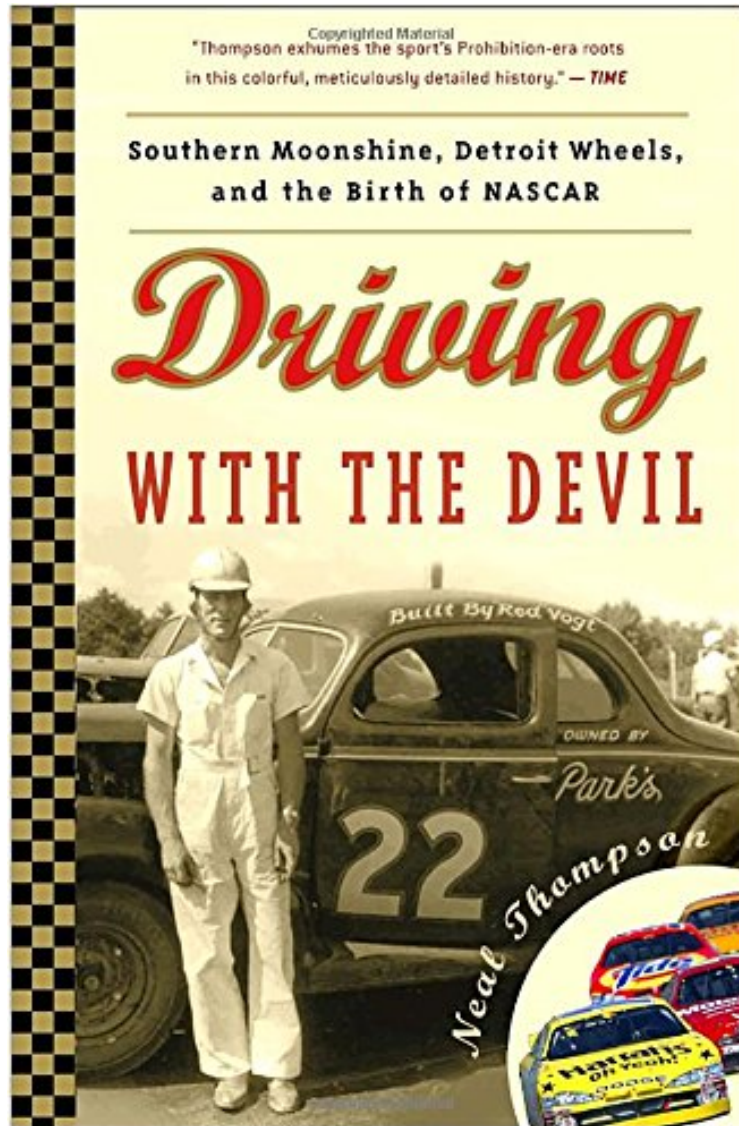


Driving with the Devil: Southern Moonshine, Detroit Wheels, and the Birth of NASCAR

Neal Thompson

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Neal Thompson : Driving with the Devil: Southern Moonshine, Detroit Wheels, and the Birth of NASCAR
before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Driving with the Devil: Southern Moonshine, Detroit Wheels, and the Birth of NASCAR:

19 of 19 people found the following review helpful. Absolutely intriguing and entertaining book! By Jim Abbott What mystifies me is that I am not a racing fan in the least but this book seemed to call to me from the library shelf. As a

new resident of Georgia, coming from NY, I felt that I needed to do the "when in Rome..." thing and soldier through the book. No need to labor, as it had me in its grip from the first page. It answered all my questions about all things southern, with a vivid description of life here in the last century as well as an unbelievably human story of the men who made moonshine and how their driving skills translated well into car racing at the outset of the stock car boom. It also introduced me to a unique man, a former master bootlegger named Raymond Parks, who, while not generally a race car driver, was as responsible as anyone for NASCAR being in existence today. His deep pockets kept many drivers racing and his mechanic, a genius named Red Vogt, actually came up with the name NASCAR. That Bill France used legal maneuvering to claim the NASCAR brand for himself and his family doesn't diminish what Raymond Parks did for the sport, and even for France himself who often found himself in need of financial help from the former moonshine baron Parks. Highly highly recommended for anyone who likes a good tale well told. A footnote--Raymond Parks still lives and works in Atlanta, owning, fittingly, a liquor store on Northside Drive. He is 93 yrs old. I stopped in to say hello the other day, and he was courteous and happy to show me all of his wonderful NASCAR and racing mementos. While slowed by age and possibly early alzheimers, he was a gentleman and I enjoyed my chat with him. Red Vogt's garage on Spring St, where the name NASCAR was coined, is still standing but is now an urban music shop. The garage door was open though, and I could see inside to where Red worked his miracles on the early Ford engines.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Lesser Known Shine By Kevin L. Martin Where you come from is gone, where you thought you were going to never was there, and where you are is no good unless you can get away from it. -Flannery O'Connor Wow! Any author that prefaces his work with a quote from Flannery O'Connor has my attention. We all know about Junior Johnson running shine for his daddy in the hills of North Carolina, but Thompson focuses in on the moonshiners of north Georgia and their customer in Atlanta-Ray Parks. Parks ran Ford V8s prepared by Red Vogt and driven by shiners Red Byron and Lloyd Seay. Thompson doesn't ignore Johnson, but does focus on the "Whiskey Trail" that ran from Dawsonville to Atlanta. Great history and a great read.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great insight into the beginning of NASCAR By Joey L. Its no surprise that while baseball/basketball/and football games are usually playing to semi-packed crowds, NASCAR is continually selling out short tracks and superspeedways that hold 160,000 people. NASCAR is exciting. And contrary to the naysayers, it requires a lot of skill and knowledge of not only racing, but engineering, aerodynamics, and overall car mechanics. But where and when did NASCAR start? Neal Thompson does a great job in tracing back the early days of southern automobile racing in the 30s and 40s when the sport was led by whiskey runners who drove moonshine from the small towns of dawsonville and dahlonega down to the bigger city of Atlanta. Thompson reveals the lives of some of these drivers (Lloyd Seay, Roy Hall, Red Byron, Fonty Flock), mechanics (Red Vogt) and car owners (Raymond Parks) showing the glorious and not-so glorious moments for each of the early stars in driving. A large part of this book focuses on the man credited with starting the organization of NASCAR: Mr. Bill France. France made his move from an okay driver to an outstanding and often times dirty promoter for the sport of racing. The book chronicles the trials France had to deal with when starting NASCAR (competition with other racing leagues, accidents at the races, financial problems). The book also shows how some tracks got started (Atlanta Lakewood Speedway, Daytona Beach and Road Course, Charlotte Speedway, Columbus Speedway and more) Driving with the Devil is truly fascinating. The beginning of NASCAR was fueled with competition, wild characters, and some truly great stories. I would highly recommend this book to the NASCAR fan looking to read about the history of the sport.

"Moonshiners put more time, energy, thought, and love into their cars than any racer ever will. Lose on the track and you go home. Lose with a load of whiskey and you go to jail." —Junior Johnson, NASCAR legend and one-time whiskey runner Today's NASCAR is a family sport with 75 million loyal fans, which is growing bigger and more mainstream by the day. Part Disney, part Vegas, part Barnum Bailey, NASCAR is also a multibillion-dollar business and a cultural phenomenon that transcends geography, class, and gender. But dark secrets lurk in NASCAR's past. Driving with the Devil uncovers for the first time the true story behind NASCAR's distant, moonshine-fueled origins and paints a rich portrait of the colorful men who created it. Long before the sport of stock-car racing even existed, young men in the rural, Depression-wracked South had figured out that cars and speed were tickets to a better life. With few options beyond the farm or factory, the best chance of escape was running moonshine. Bootlegging offered speed, adventure, and wads of cash—if the drivers survived. Driving with the Devil is the story of bootleggers whose empires grew during Prohibition and continued to thrive well after Repeal, and of drivers who thundered down dusty back roads with moonshine deliveries, deftly outrunning federal agents. The car of choice was the Ford V-8, the hottest car of the 1930s, and ace mechanics tinkered with them until they could fly across mountain roads at 100 miles an hour. After fighting in World War II, moonshiners transferred their skills to the rough, red-dirt racetracks of Dixie, and a national sport was born. In this dynamic era (1930s and '40s), three men with a passion for Ford V-8s—convicted criminal Ray Parks, foul-mouthed mechanic Red Vogt, and crippled war veteran Red Byron, NASCAR's first champion—emerged as the first stock car "team." Theirs is the violent, poignant story of how moonshine and fast cars merged to create a new sport for the South to call its own. Driving with the Devil is a

fascinating look at the well-hidden historical connection between whiskey running and stock-car racing. NASCAR histories will tell you who led every lap of every race since the first official race in 1948. Driving with the Devil goes deeper to bring you the excitement, passion, crime, and death-defying feats of the wild, early days that NASCAR has carefully hidden from public view. In the tradition of Laura Hillenbrand's *Seabiscuit*, this tale not only reveals a bygone era of a beloved sport, but also the character of the country at a moment in time. From the Hardcover edition.

From Publishers Weekly Thompson's raucous account of NASCAR's early decades raises from obscurity the "motherless, dirt-poor southern teens... in jacked-up Fords full of corn whiskey" who originated the sport that's now the second most popular in America. Stock car racing grew up in the 1930s South, when moonshine runners, having perfected the art of daredevil driving while escaping "revenueurs" hunting for untaxed whiskey, transferred their skills to the event booming in Atlanta and Daytona Beach. Loosely defined as races where the cars were totally unmodified—even though they were actually supercharged beyond recognition—stock car racing was a rawer, more redneck endeavor than AAA-sanctioned events like the Indy 500, which were the realm of rich enthusiasts driving specially built vehicles. Thompson (*Light This Candle: The Life and Times of Alan Shepard*) celebrates entrepreneurial ex-con Raymond Parks, wizardish mechanic Red Vogt and driver Red Byron instead of the better-known promoter Bill France, "the P.T. Barnum of stock car racing," whom Thompson blames for moving NASCAR from its whiskey-soaked past to mainstream, logo-strewn present. The author is clearly in love with his subject, and the enthusiasm of this breathless, nostalgic account will be contagious to Southern history buffs and historically minded NASCAR fans. (Oct.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist This is a colorful, multifaceted history of the hell-raising origins of stock-car racing in the 1930s and 1940s. Thompson fastens onto what might be considered the original stock-car racing team, an Atlanta-based trio--Raymond Parks, Red Vogt, and Lloyd Seay--who worked in the moonshine business, which depended on fast cars for escapes from lawmen. Recounting their biographies, and those of a host of bootlegging competitors, Thompson instills the outlaw milieu--Seay, the 1941 stock-car champ, was murdered in a bootlegging dispute--of the early days. Ad-hoc races, such as one held on a beach in Daytona, Florida, developed into regular events; its impresario, Bill France, disdained the bootleggers from Georgia and eventually outmaneuvered Parks and Vogt to control NASCAR when it was organized in 1947. Thompson believes that the modern NASCAR organization downplays its beginnings in white lightning. His fascinating corrective should inveigle the fans of one of the most popular sports in America today. Gilbert Taylor Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved "Thompson exhumes the sport's Prohibition-era roots in this colorful, meticulously detailed history." -Time Magazine "Here's the real story, not just of NASCAR, but of the new South that emerged from moonshine and speed." —Richard Ben Cramer, author of *Joe DiMaggio: The Hero's Life* and editor of *The Best American Sports Writing 2004* "Neal Thompson has written NASCAR's *Glory of Their Times*. He tells the true story of NASCAR's beginnings, revealing the sport's strong whiskey roots and letting us get to know its key movers and shakers, including the triumvirate of racer Red Byron, mechanic Red Vogt, and bootlegger car owner Raymond Parks. Like *Seabiscuit*, Thompson makes a sport and an era come wonderfully alive." —Peter Golenbock, author of *Miracle: Bobby Allison and the Saga of the Alabama Gang* and *American Zoom: Stock Car Racing—From Dirt Tracks to Daytona* "Driving with the Devil is a full-tilt excursion through the back roads of NASCAR's past, when moonshiners and scofflaws pioneered the sport. This is a tale that sanitized corporate NASCAR would rather forget about, but with Neal Thompson at the wheel, it makes for wonderful reading." —Sharyn McCrumb, author of *St. Dale* "Driving with the Devil is a treasure trove of historically relevant information that tracks the history of the American automobile industry, the culture and morality of the broader society, and the motivations and personalities of early stock-car-racing operatives. All of which have inexorably contributed to the foundation and fabric of NASCAR's brand of stock-car racing as it manifests itself today." —Jack Roush, chairman of Roush Racing "Driving with the Devil is a most impressive piece of work. Most Americans have the vague notion that big-time stock-car racing sprang from moonshine-hauling in the southern Appalachians prior to the Second World War, but here is documented proof that it was that and much more. Neal Thompson's *Driving with the Devil* nails it once and for all: a riveting report any student of Americana will cherish. It's no more about racing than *The Old Man and the Sea* is about fishing." —Paul Hemphill, author of *Lovesick Blues: The Life of Hank Williams* and *Wheels: A Season on NASCAR's Winston Cup Circuit* "A fascinating and fast-moving account of NASCAR's fledgling days." —Atlanta Journal Constitution "There are more divorces, drunks and wrecks than you can shake a checkered flag at...A thoroughly researched account of a 'simpler time' in a sport that has since become a multi-billion dollar business." —NBC News anchor Brian Williams, in the Wall Street Journal From the Hardcover edition.