

Donna Mae Mims



The automotive world lost its iconic "Pink Lady" on October 6 as Donna Mae Mims died of complications from a stroke at the age of 82. To car enthusiasts of a certain age, Mims was best known for her early racing career and for her penchant for pink helmets, pink jumpsuits, and pink cars usually emblazoned with the phrase "Think Pink." That predilection earned her the nickname, "Pink Lady" from her admirers.

After buying a Fuelie Corvette with her husband in the late Fifties, Mims got the racing bug. She had been a secretary at Yenko Chevrolet, the legendary Pennsylvania dealer that churned out specially souped-up super Chevies back in the Sixties and Seventies, and along with a few coworkers she decided to go racing. She also moved into the Yenko sports car division to help develop their cars.

It wasn't long before she racked up her first win driving her Corvette in B Production at the Cumberland Nationals in 1960. By 1963, she was driving a pink 1959 Austin-Healey Bugeye Sprite that had incidentally once been owned by Polio vaccine developer, Dr. Jonas Salk. That car carried her to the championship in 1963, the first national championship recorded by the SCCA for a female driver. Besides the championship-winning Bugeye Sprite, Mims at one time or another also owned a pink Corvette, Corvair, Triumph TR3 and an MGB.

Besides her fondness for the color pink, Mims was also known for her blonde hair, good looks and aggressive driving, always charging and never letting the boys push her around during her 14-year racing career. The legend of the Pink Lady was cemented when Mims took part in the inaugural Cannonball Baker Sea-To-Shining-Sea Memorial Trophy Dash, better known as the Cannonball Run, back in 1972. Her all-female team included teammates Judy Stropus and Peggy Niemcek, who raced in a 1968 Cadillac limousine wearing tight-fitting shirts and pants, and no bras. It was a ploy to hopefully get them out of any legal entanglements along the way. Adrienne Barbeau (admirably) portrayed Mims in the 1981 classic, "The Cannonball Run."

After retiring as a racer, Mims could still be found at numerous SCCA events, volunteering to work the starting grids at races like the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix and Championship Runoffs. Fun-loving till the end, Mims' dying wish was that following her passing, her body would be displayed seated behind the wheel of a pink 1979 Chevrolet Corvette during the visitation at her funeral. A group of about 40 Corvettes participated in the procession from the funeral home in McMurray, Pa. Godspeed, "Donna Amazing," our beloved Pink Lady.