

LAND SPEED RECORD FOR QUADRIPLLEGICS SET IN '68 FIREBIRD

Thanks to the contributions of Ron Phillips and the volunteer team self-named Quad Squad, quadriplegic Ron Heagy has fulfilled his decades-long dream of being the first fully quadriplegic man to drive a car over 100 mph—and he did it in a '68 Firebird.

"Heagy is an accomplished international speaker and I heard him tell of the surfing accident that paralyzed him from the neck down when he was 17 years old," says Phillips, the owner of the Firebird. "This idea intrigued me and I couldn't shake the thought that ran through my mind as I began to believe this was possible. After a few days, I shared these ideas with my close friend Michael Peters about helping Ron reach his dream in my classic Pontiac. Before the end of the day, we were enlisting our friends and fellow technicians at SEH America who have technical backgrounds in repairing high tech equipment. That's how the Quad Squad—a group of volunteers to see this project from concept to reality—was born!"

Dignified Motors—a Phoenix, Arizona-based company that specializes in vehicle-control systems for quadriplegic people who still have limited use of their hands—created and installed the system interface, which included a joystick, controller, and four servo motors, which manage steering, braking, acceleration, and shifting. The Quad Squad then installed a joystick interface, remote kill-switch system, custom driver seat, and other items that would allow Heagy to pilot the First-Gen to the centennial mark.

After a successful 50-mph run as the pace-car driver at the Rose Cup Trans Am in Portland, Oregon, in 2009, Heagy achieved 100 mph in the Firebird on September 11, 2010, in the Alvord Desert of Oregon.

Accompanied by a co-pilot, Heagy accelerated to 70 mph on the first run, and then reached 101 mph on the second pass—a dream and a goal come true. Afterwards, he piloted the Firebird solo, again hitting 101 mph.

For more information on the historic event, visit www.hoperod.com.



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