



ANDY GRANATELLI

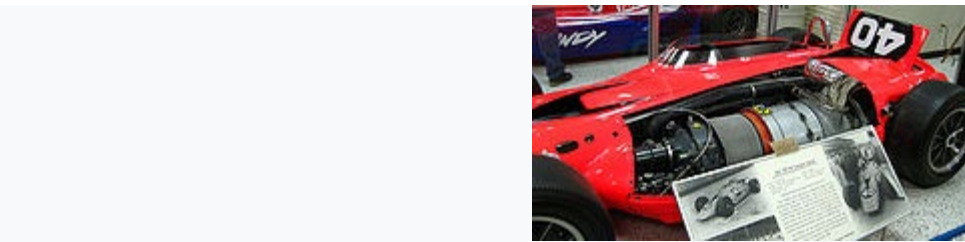
Anthony "Andy" Granatelli (March 18, 1923 – December 29, 2013) was an American businessman, most prominent as the CEO of [STP](#) as well as a major figure in automobile racing events.^[1]

Granatelli was born in [Dallas, Texas](#). Along with his brothers Vince and Joe, he first worked as an [auto mechanic](#) and "speed-shop" entrepreneur, modifying engines such as the [flathead Ford](#) into racing-quality equipment. During [World War II](#), he became a promoter of automobile racing events, such as the "Hurricane Racing Association", which combined racing opportunities for up-and-coming drivers with crowd-pleasing theatrics. Hurricane events, according to Granatelli in his autobiography *They Call Me Mister 500*, included drivers who were experts at executing—and surviving—roll-over and end-over-end crashes, and also an ambulance that not only got caught up into the race but also ejected a stretcher (with a dummy on it) into the way of the racers.

Professional career^[edit]

In 1946, the three brothers entered the first of several [Indianapolis 500](#) races, as the Grancor racing team. They did their own mechanical work, and brought innovations like fully independent suspension, yet never made it to "Victory Lane". In 1948, Andy decided to try to qualify as a driver, and nearly did so, but a horrendous crash during his qualifying run ended that part of his career.

Granatelli eventually became visible in the racing world in the 1960s as the spokesman for [STP](#) oil and gasoline treatment products, appearing on its television and radio advertisements as well as sponsoring race cars. He clad his pit crews in white coveralls with the oval STP logo scattered all over them, and once wore a suit jacket with the same STP-laden design. He made a cameo appearance in the 1968 Disney movie [The Love Bug](#).



[STP-Paxton Turbocar](#) from the [1967 Indianapolis 500](#).

Granatelli's cars became a significant presence at the Indianapolis 500. While he first gained notoriety by re-introducing the [Novi](#) engine, his best known entries were his [turbine](#)-powered cars in [1967](#) and [1968](#). In both years, he saw probable race-winners fail near the end; [Joe Leonard](#)'s breakdown in the [Lotus 56](#) with 10 laps remaining in 1968 had been topped the previous year when [Parnelli Jones](#), leading comfortably with just three laps to go, suffered the failure of a six dollar transmission bearing in the [STP-Paxton Turbocar](#) and retired, handing a sure victory to [A. J. Foyt](#).^[2]

He was awarded as an Indianapolis 500 winner in 1969. After his innovative Lotus [four-wheel drive](#) car was destroyed in practice upon establishing itself as one of the most dominant cars to date, his driver [Mario Andretti](#), nursing the burns from the Lotus crash, won at the wheel of a year-old backup car. Before Andretti could be traditionally kissed in "Victory Lane" by the Queen of the "500 Festival", Granatelli got there first, and his joyful kiss on Andretti's cheek is one of the 500's most memorable images. However rumor is that the kiss began the infamous [Indianapolis 500 curse that is named for Mario Andretti's family](#).

In 1973, Granatelli retired his USAC team, and STP became a sponsor of [Patrick Racing](#). [Gordon Johncock](#) won the 1973 and 1982 Indianapolis 500 for the brand.

It was believed that Granatelli attended every [Indianapolis 500](#), whether as a participant or as a spectator, from 1946–2012.^[3] He did not attend the race in 2013, and died later that year.

Mr. 500

Andy Granatelli dreamed of conquering the Indianapolis 500. However, for the scrappy kid growing up in the slums of Chicago, this dream would have to wait. Granatelli's mother died when he was 12, after-which he dropped out of school to help his father feed the family. His quest for the Indy 500 would finally begin in 1943 at age 20, when he and his brother pooled their money to purchase a gas station on the north side of Chicago which they named "Andy's Super Service." Granatelli knew he needed a gimmick to set himself apart from other stations, leading him to create the "pit stop" service, which utilized a team of mechanics to work on the one car all at once. Customers appreciated the experience, often waiting in line for this unique treatment, and the station was soon prosperous.

Granatelli formed his own Corporation, Grancor Automotive Specialists, in 1945, and began pioneering the mass merchandising of automotive performance products. In 1958, he purchased Paxton Products, a failing engineering firm that made superchargers. Granatelli made the company profitable in seven months and sold it to Studebaker Corporation. Recognizing Granatelli's ability, Studebaker asked Granatelli to work his magic on another under-performing division called Chemical Compounds Corporation. The company had only one product; STP Oil Treatment. Granatelli began to turn the company around by making the STP logo become one of the best recognized in motorsports by placing it in virtually every venue of speed.

Granatelli's business successes enabled him to finally start his racing career in 1946, when he and his two brothers entered their first Indy 500 race. Andy attempted to qualify for the race as a driver in 1948 and nearly succeeded, but a horrendous crash during qualifying ended his driving career. Granatelli would finally win his first Indy 500 as a team owner and constructor in 1969 with Mario Andretti at the wheel. Four years later, in 1973, Andy won his second and last Indy 500. Through his business acumen, determination, and engineering prowess, Andy Granatelli was able to achieve his childhood dream of conquering one of the world's most famous races and become "Mr. 500".

It's hard to know where to start with Andy Granatelli. He combined business acumen and salesmanship to

produce so many varied careers, some of which seem downright unbelievable, that each one would stand as a Horatio Alger epic in its own right.

In 1948, he passed his driver's test at Indy using his good friend Bill France, Sr.'s helmet. Soon thereafter, he was Vice Chairman of NASCAR. He was President of the "Hurricane Racing Association, Inc.'" and also promoted hot rod and stock car races throughout the Midwest with the biggest quarter mile crowds ever, 89,560 people at Soldiers' Field in Chicago. As Chief Driver and Engineer at Studebaker Racing, he set over 400 world land speed records. At the age of 62 in his street legal passenger car, he drove to an amazing record of 241.731 mph on pump gasoline. He took the immortal Novi racing engine and increased the horsepower from 450 to 837. He also designed the Chrysler 300 engine, the Cadillac Eldorado engine and the Studebaker Avanti, R I, II,III and IV engines. He was responsible for starting March Works, which is a Formula land II car constructor. He designed, built and raced the world famous Indianapolis turbine engine cars in 1967 and 1968, and his race cars have won the Indianapolis 500 twice. His business accomplishments are still buzzed about in financial circles. He took an unknown company called Chemical Compounds, changed it's name to STP, and in nine years it zoomed from seven to over 2,000 employees. He made STP a household word.

Granatelli went to Indianapolis with the Turbine car with Parnelli Jones as his driver. Jones led 197 laps of the 200-lap race until a gear bearing failed. Afterward, USAC banned the car.

In 1969, Granatelli teamed up with Mario Andretti to win his first Indianapolis 500. He won it again in 1973 with Gordon Johncock as his driver. Granatelli brought STP sponsorship to Petty Enterprises and Richard Petty, who of course, won immediately and often. That relationship, the STP-Petty union, one of the longest associations in all of motorsports.

Other great drivers that drove for Granatelli were Freddie Agabashian, Chris Amon, Buddy Baker, Neil Bonnett, Jim Clark, Wally Dallenbach, Larry Dixon, Pat Flaherty, Graham Hill, Jim Hurtibise, Steve Krisiloff, Nikki Lauda, Joe Leonard, Freddie Lorenzen, Art Malone, Jim Malloy, Jimmy McElreath, Ronnie Peterson, Art Pollard, Sam Posey, Jim and Dick Rathmann, Jochen Rindt, Paul Russo, Swede Savage, Joe Seiffer, Dick Simon, Mike Spence, Chuck Stevens, Al and Bobby Unser and Greg Weld.

A racer, a car owner, designer, businessman, promotional genius, an automotive expert, Granatelli proved to be all of these things. His face isn't seen at the tracks any more, but he is still a successful business entrepreneur in California. Really, though, one doesn't have to see to know him. Just look around. Soon you'll see the letters, "STP'." And they will always call him "Mr. 500."

