



Photo: LaDon George

Crozier's company, Nelson Specialties, manufactures and tests electrical components for race cars. He estimates around 80 percent of race teams in NASCAR's top divisions use his company's products.

Crozier's solution would make any motorhead proud.

"We ended up recommending that they use a small-block Chevy engine and we put a magneto ignition on it and did all the wiring," he recalls. "Some of their higher-ups said, 'What are you doing, building a race car here?'"

Of course, Crozier's efforts immediately solved the problem. His solution sounds simple, but it's pure Nelson Crozier, through and through. He's a master at getting to the core of a tough problem, and supplying a common-sense solution

that leaves everyone scratching their heads saying, "Why didn't I think of that?"

"Whatever you do, you work with the resources you have," Crozier says. "You just have to be innovative and understand how things work. It's strange what you can do when there's no other way to do it. ... Sometimes, you have to improvise in life."

Through the 1970s and '80s, Crozier's electronics firm moved seamlessly from government and military work into racing applications. What didn't change was his common-sense approach to problems. From his earliest days in the sport, he had been baffled by the lack of standardization in electrical components in race cars. One of his biggest pet peeves was the confusing jumble of wiring in the car. So he set out to remedy

the situation. The result has made life much easier for race teams everywhere.

"We have pretty much standardized the electric wiring," Crozier says. "That doesn't mean everybody uses it, but at least it is a standard. Everything we make adheres to the same color code, so if somebody calls up and wants to know where the gray wire goes, if it's in the ignition system, that's a ground wire for the tach ... the yellow wire is power for the tach.

"Most of it's straightforward, just like male/female connectors for your household receptacles. We do the same thing on a race car. It's just a standard way of doing things. ... Most of it's just common sense."

One of Crozier's toughest prob-

lems these days has no simple remedy: Despite a very high volume of work, Nelson Specialties operates with a five member staff.

"We're always running behind," Crozier says. "We can find warm bodies, but we can't find people who A) Are conscientious enough to do the job that we need; and B) Are not coming here just to learn how to do things so they can go work for somebody else."

To help cope with the staggering workload, in recent years Crozier has tried to computerize more of his firm's operations. He's particularly proud of a bench-testing computer named "Mary" that he says took five years to plan and build.

Still, Crozier has to perform many of the test jobs himself. As you might expect, he dives into the task, giving it his undivided attention. And as he mentioned, he hates to say "No" to anyone. One recent morning, he had a stack of messages from people seeking his help. One short track racer wanted Crozier to help rebuild a carburetor ("I haven't done that type in years," Crozier said). Another racer sought advice on video equipment. Crozier said he'd call him back.

"You can't differentiate between someone who runs on Saturday night and has a problem and a Winston Cup guy who has a problem," he says. "They're both racers."

When he has some spare time, Crozier enjoys cooking and travel. But he seems much more at home when he's on the job. Why does he push himself so hard? Because, he says, he's always looking for a better, simpler way of doing things.

"I like the challenge," Crozier says. "It's always irritated me when somebody says, 'You can't do that.' Well, why can't you? Maybe they can't do it, but somebody can always come up with a way to do something that is called impossible to somebody else.

"That's something that's a challenge, to make your brain work a little bit."

And Crozier's brain at work is a sight to behold indeed. ■