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Eastern Auto Racing  
Historical Society

Newsletter

Vol. XIII 2016 Ed. #4

MISSION STATEMENT

A) To discover, identify, gather, preserve, and display documents, records, items, etc. pertaining to eastern auto racing facilities, competitors, personalities or events.

B) To assist writers to publish and/or research articles regarding historical eastern auto racing topics.

Our organization collects & displays articles dealing with any eastern auto racing facilities for any racing enthusiast to enjoy. Please consider either joining our organization or contributing to our projects.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

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AREA OF INTEREST: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$25 SUPPORTER  
Non-voting supporter of the mission statement of the EARHS. Admission to showroom by appointment.

\_\_\_\_\_ \$40 INTERNATIONAL  
Non-voting international supporter with basic benefits.

\_\_\_\_\_ \$250 CORPORATE SUPPORTER  
Corporate supporters are non-voting supporters whose contribution to the EARHS will be permanently noted in the EARHS showroom. Contributions will be used to develop additional displays, catalog information collected, and to defray expenses in pursuit of the mission statement.

PLEASE MAIL TO:

EARHS, P.O. BOX 333, OREFIELD, PA 18069  
Make checks payable to EARHS.

For additional information  
call 610 395-5303 or 610 398-2188

\*\*EARHS is recognized as a federally tax exempt charity by the IRS under section 510c(3).

EARHS  
P.O. Box 333  
Orefield, PA 18069

USAC Finale At Allentown Fifty Years Ago

On Saturday, August 14, 1966, the United States Auto Club sanctioned auto racing at The Great Allentown Fair for the final time. Since the sanctioning body was formed for the 1956 season, USAC presented thirteen sprint car programs and one midget program in eleven seasons. Two programs were run in 1956 and 1965 and the USAC racing on the final Saturday of the fair was always an outstanding event which drew fans and competitors from across the nation. Although sprint cars sanctioned by the International Motor Contest Association appeared at Allentown in 1967 and 1968, the national publicity from a berth on the USAC national sprint car schedule ended fifty years ago.

Earlier in the year, popular Red Riegel of nearby Leesport, PA and veteran Jud Larson, both winners of the USAC events at the 1965 Allentown Fair perished together in the same bruising crash in turn one of the USAC sprint car feature at the Reading, PA Fairgrounds on June 11, 1966. To add to the trying season, USAC rookie and 1965 Oswego, NY supermodified champion, Ron Lux, from the Buffalo, NY area, was also killed in a flip at Tulsa, OK on 7-16-66.

At the end of the 30-lapper at Allentown on 8-14-66, the packed grandstand applauded the first career USAC sprint car win posted by handsome west coast rookie driver, Dick Atkins, as he scored a popular victory at the wheel of Wally Meskowski's Chevy powered #9. Even hometown hero, Mario Andretti, driving Meskowski's team car, a #1 also of the owner's design, could not reign in the rookie on this day.



Dick Atkins in Meskowski's #9 Chevy leads Don Branson in the Leader Card #6 Offy in the main



*Local businessman, Gene Fritzinger, presents feature winner, Dick Atkins, the Fair trophy.*

In the only USAC midget program ever presented at the Allentown Fair, Don Meacham drove Myron Caves' Offy #85 to victory in the 50-lap feature event on Friday afternoon, August 6, 1966.

Nearly three months after the gates had closed on the 1966 edition of the Great Allentown Fair, the USAC sprint car division still had three races left on the west coast to determine the USAC National Sprint Car Champion.

On lap five of the 11-12-66 USAC 30-lap sprint car feature at Ascot Park in Gardena, CA, Don Branson struck the turn one retaining wall, flipped, and landed upside down in the path of Dick Atkins, who was racing behind him. Atkins also flipped from the impact and a flash fire erupted before track personnel could extract him. Both men died instantly in the crash. Branson was 46 years-old and planned to take a job with Goodyear as their champ car representative at the end of the season. 'Gramps' never got to retire and Dick Atkins never got to realize the great potential he showed on his climb to the top of the USAC ladder.

After the accident was cleared, Roger McCluskey pulled down his goggles, pushed off, and won the race in Mutt Anderson's #51. The next afternoon, the USAC group drove 350 miles north, where A.J. Foyt won the 30-lap main event in Wally Meskowski's #1 car on the paved half mile at Altamont, CA. In the USAC season finale at Manzanita Park's 1/2 mile dirt on 11-27-66, Mario Andretti was the winner, again in Wally Meskowski's #1. Roger McCluskey persevered to claim the 1966 USAC National Sprint Car Championship. Tough men.

#### ALLENTOWN USAC SPRINT CAR WINNERS:

- Tommy Hinnershitz, 7-7-56, 9-22-56, 9-26-59  
- Tommy is a 6-time winner, including three with AAA
- Johnny Thomson: 9-21-57, 9-20-58
- Jud Larson: 8-15-64, 8-7-65
- Jim Packard: 9-24-60
- Jim Hurtubise: 9-23-61
- Parnelli Jones: 9-22-62
- Johnny White: 9-21-63
- Red Riegel: 8-11-65
- Dick Atkins: 8-14-66

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*From Freddy's family, friends, and fans*



Your monetary support in any denomination or donations of historically significant items, photos, documents, etc. toward projects undertaken by the EARHS are welcomed and encouraged. EARHS is recognized as a federally tax exempt charity by the IRS under Section 501c(3).

### **EARHS “wants and needs”**

**Wanted:** Racing photo collections – share and preserve programs. If you have vintage racing photos, EARHS would like to be able to scan and copy these items. All items will be returned intact and we can provide you with a computer disc of those items from significant collections.

We are especially interested in Dorney Park items from the 1940's, 1950's, and 1960's and all Allentown Fair items, including indoor racing events, but all items are welcome.

**Wanted:** Showcases and display cases. Often cases of unusual configuration can be used for displays of trophies and memorabilia.

Group tours of the EARHS showroom are available for civic and auto related groups, car clubs, etc.

Call 610 398-2188 or 610 395-5303

We continue to fill our showroom—all members are invited to visit and check our progress. Please call Pete Trumbauer (610 398-2188) or Paul Weisel (610 395-5303) to arrange a time to visit.

