

Harry A. Miller Club News

Indy Car Racing Goes South



Bill Schindler (Chapman Spl. #17) and Duane Carter (Grancor Spl. #59) lead the 26-car field at Darlington. Photo from the Steve Zautke collection.

Harold Brasington along with his partners, Barney Wallace and Bob Colvin, had big plans when they scheduled the “big cars” for the new Darlington “superspeedway.” It was highly promoted with many of the drivers coming in the week prior for promotional appearances, along with several of the teams and their highly polished exotic race cars, many whose crews rented out boarding houses nearby. Although scheduled for December 9th and a normal average temperature of 61°, anticipation was high, especially with several drivers vying for the AAA National Championship. Secretary of the AAA contest Board Jim Lamb proclaimed to *Illustrated Speedway News*, the Darlington race will be one of the greatest racing events staged anywhere.

The racing world was abuzz as a few weeks prior, popular Gilmore Stadium had just held their last midget car race on Thanksgiving on property, that was to become CBS Television City. A relative unknown bespectacled rookie had won the pole at the Phoenix Fairgrounds, as Bobby Ball driving the stretched Malloy Special, formerly a sprint car magically turned into a Championship car by master craftsman, Bob Pankratz stunned onlookers. It was a Hollywood debut, but Ball unfortunately dropped out because of a broken crankshaft, as Jimmy Davies went on to victory after Tony Bettenhausen's late pit stop.

After Phoenix, the Championship trail went north to the San Francisco area, where Tony Bettenhausen won in the Belanger Offy at Bay Meadows, located just a tad south of current SFO airport. It was Bettenhausen's third win of the year. Bettenhausen led flag-to-flag over Sam Hanks who surprisingly finished his first championship car race on dirt. The win was disputed as Bettenhausen's car died just after the checkered flag. A scoring check showed that only 149



Johnnie Parsons in the Russo-Nichels #7 the surprising winner of the 1950 Darlington 200. Photo from the Steve Zautke collection.

of the 150-laps were run, giving Sam Hanks the win, or did he? After several hours, AAA officials declared Bettenhausen the winner, after someone debated, doesn't the checkered flag end the race? The next race was Darlington. Six drivers had a chance to win the AAA championship. 1. Walt Faulkner – 1217 pts, 2. Henry Banks – 1110, 3. Bettenhausen – 1027 4. Cecil Green – 950 5. Paul Russo – 928, 6. Johnnie Parsons – 913 with 400-points available to the winner the finale at Darlington. Points paid on mileage of race, thus Parsons did not get the full allotment of 1000-points for his rain-shortened win at Indianapolis.

Qualifying was held on Wednesday, as Bill Schindler grabbed the pole position in the Chapman Spl. at 110.837-mph. Duane Carter locked in the outside front row in the Grancor Spl. Paul Russo driving his Nichels-Russo Spl. repaired from his spill at the Fairgrounds in Phoenix exited the #7 car during practice after the banks of Darlington proved too much to his still-healing shoulder. Johnnie Parsons who was entered in the Jim Robbins Spl., with the number one on the tail that he had earned by winning the '49 championship had lost his ride as he had travel issues traveling from California.

It was 1950, cross-country travel was a few years away from the jet-age. Missing a day of travel because of the DC-6, they were going to travel East and had mechanical issues. The following day, Parsons and wife Lila flew to Chicago on TWA, caught a connector to Charlotte and made it by bus to Darlington. The late-arriving

continued on page 2



Final American Automobile Association National Championship Point Standings

1. Henry Banks	1390	34.	Neal Carter	179
2. Walt Faulkner	1317	37.	Harry Turner	164.5
3. Johnnie Parsons	1313	38.	Bob Boyers	160
4. Cecil Green	1190	39.	Louis Unser	150
5. Tony Bettenhausen	1057.5	39.	Bill Mackey	135
6. Duke Dinsmore	1011	31.	George Hammond	130
7. Paul Russo	958	32.	Jerry Hoyt	110
8. Chuck Stevenson	769	23.	Charles Bryant	100
9. Jack McGrath	736.5	34.	Walt Killinger	80
10. Bill Schindler	699	35.	Myron Fabe	69
11. Lee Wallard	637	36.	Frank Bernaby	60
12. Jimmie Davies	605.5	37.	Lloyd Axel	60
13. Bill Holland	605	38.	Joel Thorne	50
14. Fred Agabashian	532.5	28.	Troy Rutiman	46
15. Mauri Rose	482	40.	Walt Brown	41.5
16. Andy Linden	459.5	41.	Johnny Mauro	40
17. Duke Nalon	394	42.	Raylene Levett	36
18. Mack Hellings	380	43.	Duane Carter	24.5
19. Joie Chitwood	337.5	44.	Bob Ball	30
20. George Connor	282.5	45.	Rager Ward	30
21. Cliff Griffith	255	46.	Shelby Hill	30
22. Sam Hanks	249	47.	Belmont Deach	30
23. Joe James	227.5	48.	Jimmy Good	10
24. Ray Knepper	225	49.	Ralph Pratt	9.5
25. Al Rogers	200	50.	Johnny McDowell	6

Parsons, whose luggage was still missing, found veteran Joie Chitwood in the car, his helmet and clothes elsewhere. Russo invited Parsons to take over his car. Parsons had some awareness as he test-hopped the car for Russo at Indianapolis earlier in the year. Parsons familiarized

himself with the track, making adjustments and borrowed Russo's helmet, Joe Scopa's coveralls and gloves from Ed Stone. Parsons qualified on Thursday, taking the fastest time (113.636-mph) but ended up starting 6th, behind the five who qualified a day earlier. Russo was had also missed Bay Meadows was eliminated from the championship.

Rain washed out the Saturday-scheduled race, thus Brasington paid the \$25.00 South Carolina Blue Law fine for violating the sabbath and ran the race on Sunday. The expectant crowd of 20,000 who had a choice of \$6.60 grandstand tickets or \$8.80 reserved box seats fizzled due to the blustery weather that followed. About 8,000 fans showed up as Duane Carter took the early lead in a race. Bill Mackey and Schindler took over and traded the lead for several laps as the 26-starters roared around the one and a quarter paved oval.

Two incidents spiced up the action as Mackey who had led earlier in the Iddings Spl. spun into the inside wall after running three abreast down into the first turn. Hitting the wall tail first, Mackey avoided injury. The second incident involved Walt Brown who blew a right-rear tire and spun down the front stretch in the new Federal Engineering KK3000 wrenched by Russ Snowberger. Brown's car struck mechanic Julius Schaaf of the Banks' Blue Crown crew pinning him against the pit wall. Taken by ambulance to a Florence, SC hospital, Schaaf was eventually released only receiving 'minor injuries.'

The 160-lap, 200-mile race saw Parsons eventually take over from early leaders, Carter and Mackey and ultimately holding off Schindler for the victory (winning \$4800 of the roughly \$20,000-purse). Parsons overwhelmed the field dominating the second half of the race for the relatively easy win. Henry Banks who won at Detroit earlier in the year and racked up eight top-5 finishes including a third at Darlington won the National Championship in the Lindsey Hopkins Spl. with 1390 points.

Parsons who won the lucrative Indianapolis 500 (690-pts) and Darlington (400-pts) but because of relief drivers (points calculated by miles driven), ended up third in points behind Walt Faulkner (Grant Piston Ring / Agajanian Spl.) with 1313 points. Cecil Green and Tony Bettenhausen filled out the top-5 in points. Also noteworthy was that there were no drivers lost to accidents in 1950 AAA National Championship competition.

Brasington and his group licked their fiscal wounds and scheduled the "Indy Car boys" to come back next year, although this time

on the fourth of July. Faulkner would win the event in 1951. In 1952, the short-lived NASCAR open wheel series ran the event. The NASCAR-sanctioned series had older upright dirt cars powered with stock-block engines such as GMC, Cadillac, Ford and DeSoto. The '52 event saw Buck Baker win over Bill Miller and Tom Cherry. Other notables in the race were, Al Keller, Wally Campbell, Jiggs Peters, Tony Bonadies and Dick Rathmann. Manny Ayulo won the AAA event in 1954 and Pat O'Connor winning the AAA final event at Darlington in 1956.

- Steve Zautke



Newspaper clippings, self-captioned, courtesy of the Steve Zautke collection.

Time to Mail 2021 Member Dues

Membership fees are now due for 2021. If you would like to continue to receive your newsletters and event admission discount, please forward to:

Harry Miller Club, P.O. Box 740762, Boynton Beach, FL 33474.

New members please complete the membership application found on the Harry Miller Club website: harrymillerclub.com. The fee for new members or members who joined after 2011 is \$40.

The long term, loyal member fee is \$25. This rate is for members who have been part of this wonderful club for more than 9 years.

Thank you for dropping your check in the mail promptly.

Congratulations Carrol Jensen!

Elkhart Lake's Road America Inc., recently announced the addition of Carrol Jensen to its Board of Directors. Jensen currently serves as Vice President of the Classic Car Club of America Museum and Events Chairman for the Masterpiece LTD automotive charity.

Carrol and her husband Carl have been active members of the Harry Miller Club for many years, recently displaying their 1930 Stutz Speedster at the Millers at Milwaukee event. They have also been avid participants and judges in the antique and sports collector car world for more than 30 years, with a passion for driving in tours and rallies.

Previous to her current position at the Classic Car Club of America Museum, Jensen served as President of the Classic Car Club of America where she provided oversight to a 4000+ membership worldwide organization. Jensen also served as the Vice President of Implementation for Assurant Health in Milwaukee for 27 years.



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Beloved Indianapolis Motor Speedway Historian Davidson Retiring



INDIANAPOLIS, IN - Donald Davidson, beloved by race fans worldwide for nearly six decades for his encyclopedic knowledge of Indianapolis Motor Speedway and the Indianapolis 500, is retiring Dec. 31 as IMS historian.

Davidson has amazed, entertained and delighted millions since he first crossed the Atlantic to visit IMS in May 1964, fulfilling a dream and his fascination with "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing" since his teenage years growing up in Salisbury, England.

Since then, Davidson has become known and respected around the globe for his preservation and promotion of the history of IMS and the Indianapolis 500. His unique blend of passion, knowledge and a genial personality is immediately apparent to all, whether through interaction with fans at the IMS Museum or the track, answering historical queries from fans and car collectors,

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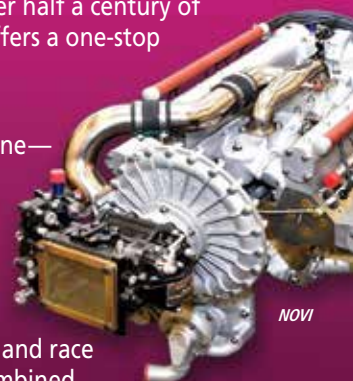
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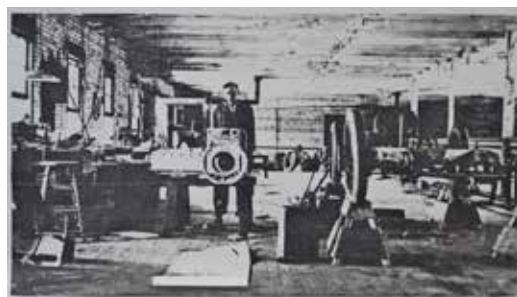
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The Saga of Miller's 4-cylinder 183 Racing Cars

By mid-1919, Harry Miller was urgently needing to create new engines and cars for the next year's international 183 cu. in. formula. The saga of what transpired has previously been portrayed as independent car narratives, not as the intertwined reality it was.

Miller convinced two wealthy new patrons, Cliff Durant and Eddie Maier, to fund the same tight-deadline project, which unsurprisingly did not end well. Durant announced in August 1919 that he was ordering three new 183 cu. in. racing cars from Miller for entry in the 1920 French Grand Prix. Concurrently, Eddie Maier, of the Maier Brewing Co., announced the incorporation of the TNT Automobile Manufacturing Company, by Maier, Miller, Ruess, Carlisle, and Bonham to produce automobiles, specifically racing cars that with slight modifications could be produced as sports cars. Maier had 250 shares and the others only 1 share each. Notably, Durant was not an investor.

Miller assigned the design of the new 183 engine and chassis to Leo Goossen, who had just joined the firm in August. Goossen laid



Leo Goossen with the T4 engine and first 183 chassis.

out Miller's vision of an elegant, fully enclosed, chain driven DOHC, Ballot-influenced, 4-cylinder 181 cu. in. Alloyanum engine, called the T4 and stamped with "TNT AUTO MFG CO" on the engine. The Peugeot-influenced chassis featured large road-racing brakes (in contrast to the miniscule brakes of the later 122s and 91s).

There were great plans for this T4 engine: it was to power three



Ira Vail in the first 8-cylinder 183 Miller.

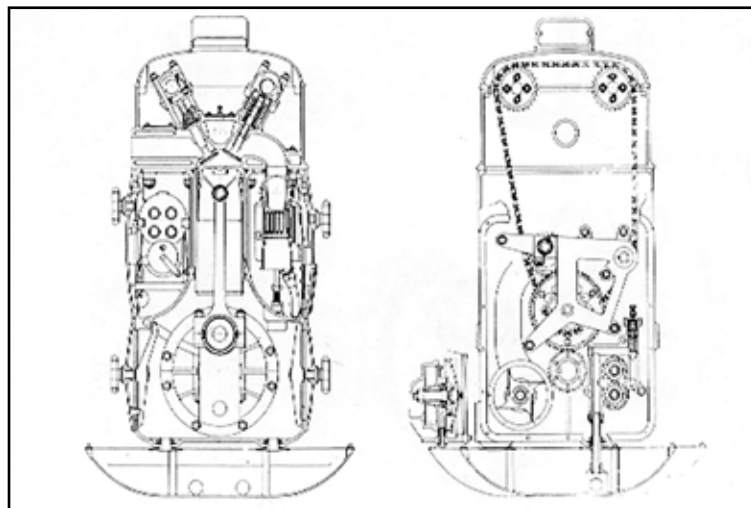
Durant cars, two Maier cars, and repower Oldfield's Golden Sub. Cars by Durant (1), Oldfield (1), and the TNT Company (2), were entered in the 1920 Indy 500. Because of what transpired next, only Durant and Oldfield showed up, and neither qualified.

Rumor was Durant paid \$27,000 for the first car, called the Baby Chevrolet, which was completed Jan-Feb 1920. However, the engine performed so poorly the car could only manage 87 mph. Aside from Indy qualifying, no record has been found of it ever running a race with the T4 engine. It is said that in unmitigated frustration, Durant finally revved the engine to destruction. He abandoned the venture and the other two chassis built, and refused to have anything to do with Miller until 1923.

Nevertheless, in late 1920, Durant loaned the Baby Chevrolet to Milton who first re-powered it with a Duesenberg 8-cylinder 183, then in 1921 installed the second Miller 8-cylinder 183 engine into what was called the Durant/Miller Special or Milton-Durant Special. Durant again drove the car in 1922 and that September, Roscoe Sarles fatally crashed with it in Kansas City, with the car being totally burned. It is this car that Bill Castle faithfully reconstructed, using the correct and only surviving original Miller 8-cylinder 183 engine with detachable head.

Maier who undoubtedly was expecting that his funding, their new company, and an order for two complete cars would have him first in line, instead received the second engine and fourth chassis in a car that became known as the TNT. This car more closely represented Miller's original vision of a streamlined cast-aluminum bodied car with exposed engine (which is why the T4 engine was fully enclosed). But either because of the poor engine performance or bad business relations, Maier took possession of only one car and also ended the venture and his investment. At some point, this engine also blew, and Maier parked it on display in his brewery. The TNT stayed with Maier until mid-WWII when it was sold; subsequent owners were Mr. Black, who discarded the blown engine; Harrah's Collection; Dave Hedrick; Bob Sutherland, who restored the car with a Miller

continued on page 7



Rear and front views of the T4 engine.



8-cylinder 183 engine; Fred Bohlander; and now, Dan Davis.

But what happened to the other three engine-less but otherwise complete chassis after the 1920 debacle?

In mid-1920, Riley Brett bought the two Durant chassis for a remarkable 181 cu. in. DOHC 6-cylinder engine that he'd helped design for C. L. Richards' Indy racing program. Built in Kansas City, these were called the Junior Specials and both cars raced in the 1921 Indy. They were subsequently owned by George Wade, Harlan Fengler, Fred Lecklider, then disappeared until Dave Hedrick found one, now being restored.

The second Maier chassis languished at Miller's until it was used in 1921 for Miller's first 8-cylinder 183 engine to create the first Miller 8-cylinder 183 racing car, Ira Vail's Leach Special. It raced successfully at Indy in 1921, 1922, and at other tracks. The car was eventually raced into pieces.

- By Harold Peters

Message From Club President – Tedd Zamjahn

Best Wishes For New Year

Happy New Year to all. I hope your holiday season was as good as you could make it this year. Let's hope for a better 2021.

I have been catching up on old projects both car and home related, and I would assume you are all doing the same thing. Getting projects done is one bright spot in this very difficult year.

We are hoping and expecting that the Milwaukee Mile State Fair Park will be open and available for our event this coming July 9-10. As of this date, they are saying it will be open. If you are like me, I plan on signing up to attend as many events as I can this year. My fingers are crossed that the vaccines will be effective and travel will be safe, so that our 26th annual event will take place as scheduled! Looking forward to seeing everyone in July!



Chris Pook & the History of the Long Beach Grand Prix

In Gordon Kirby's latest Racemaker Press biography, Chris Pook relates the story of his life. Born and raised in England, Chris emigrated to the United States in 1963 and founded the Long Beach Grand Prix in 1975. Since that time, the event has established itself as America's longest-running, most successful street race. Kirby and Pook tell many tales about the difficulties Chris faced on the way to making the race succeed. The book also covers Pook's ultimately unsuccessful efforts to help promote the Indy Lights and Toyota/Atlantic series, as well as the Laguna Seca racetrack. Finally, the book details Formula One's FISA/FOCA war in 1979-1980 and the CART/IRL war twenty years later. Pook tells this story very frankly and in considerable detail, providing a rare look inside the business and politics of big-time automobile racing in the United States.

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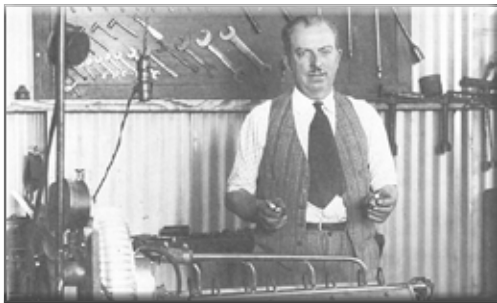
The 26th Annual Millers at Milwaukee - Vintage Indy Car Event July 9-10, 2021

Be sure to mark your calendars for our 2021 Miller event at the historic Milwaukee Mile track! Please check out the Club website for upcoming weekend details and to request your entry application. The entry rates for the weekend are the same as prices set for 2020. \$400 for first car, \$350 for each additional car.

Please note that the Crowne Plaza hotel has been rebranded with the name Sonesta Milwaukee West. The hotel is still owned and managed by the same hotel group as before, and we will receive the same excellent service and quality dining as we have in past years. To make a room reservation, please call 414-475-9500 and mention you are with the Harry Miller Club group. The room rate is \$124 per night.

We are looking forward to another great weekend of vintage racecars and catching up with old friends!

About The Harry A. Miller Club



Harry A. Miller

Harry Miller is quite simply the greatest creative figure in the history of American auto racing. He created the great school of American thoroughbred engine design, which was faithfully followed by those who sought to outdo him. Miller was the first U.S. designer who viewed the racing car as an art object. Miller had a passion for metalwork and machinery that soared above and beyond all other designers. **From The Miller Dynasty, By Mark Dees, The Hippodrome Publishing Co. 1994*

David V. Uihlein, Sr., founder of the Harry Miller Club, sought to bring recognition to Harry Miller and his vast accomplishments, by

sharing his great race car and engine designs with younger generations.

Miller based cars and engines dominated championship competition in this country during the 1920's, winning 39 Indianapolis 500 races!

To Join the Harry A. Miller Club

Membership renewals for members who have held continued membership for more than five years is \$25.

Please mail your check (made out to The Harry Miller Club), along with your name, address, phone, and e-mail to:

**Harry Miller Club
P.O. Box 740762
Boynton Beach, FL 33474.**

PLEASE NOTE there is a new mailing address for the Miller Club - listed above.

New members may complete the membership application found on the Harry Miller Club website: harrymillerclub.com, or call 262-388-5221. The fee for new members, or members who began membership after 2011 is \$40.

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This newsletter welcomes contributions, photos, and suggestions. We hope to feature stories about members' car restorations or other news pertinent to vintage auto collectors. All items submitted for the newsletter shall be considered an expressed warranty by the author that said material is in no way an infringement upon the rights of others. Editor : Lenore Heinzelmänn

The Harry Miller Club News is published three times per year, and is printed for the auto racing enthusiast interested in open wheel history. The next deadline for submission is April 15, 2021.