Harry A. Miller Club News



By now many of you have likely heard the big news, that this year we are running our annual event a new location. After going back and forth with the Milwaukee Mile who so badly did not want to turn us away, it was finally determined that we could not run there this year. But the reason is actually a good one: the track is having \$3 million in upgrades! Now that is exciting! NASCAR truck series will be running there, and a number of upgrades were required, we are all glad to see this historic track get infusions of life. But after looking at every possible option, we just won't be able to run at Milwaukee this year.

This left a lot of scrambling to try to find a track that was both appropriate for our historic cars and was available. Hence this issue



of our newsletter has had to be delayed while we tried to find a venue. We will now be able to get back on our normal newsletter schedule. In the end, the best solution was to go to Lucas Oil Indianapolis Race Park (IRP).

While Milwaukee is the oldest continuously running racetrack in the world, IRP has some interesting background too. They broke ground in 1958 and one of the original investors was Rodger Ward. The track opened in 1960 and in 1965 Mario Andretti won his first Indy car race on the road circuit, which was particularly historic as it was the first time (in recent times) that Indy cars ran on a road circuit. The road circuit is no longer in use and IRP is actually most famous for drag racing. In fact, it is owned by the NHRA. The oval which is 0.7 mile in length is in regular use and has a very full schedule including ARCA, NASCAR Truck, USAC and others.

To use this venue, we did have to move track time to Thursday and Friday, July 6 & 7. But since we are in the racing capital, we have some very interesting treats too! On Wednesday night, our welcome BBQ will be at Turn 4 Restorations, owned by Indy car restorer Rick Duman. After we leave the track on Thursday for our banquet, we will head to Dallara IndyCar factory located in Speedway Dallara, and Italian race car builder that was founded in 1972, made their debut in Indy car 26 years ago. We are thrilled to announce that our speaker will be Lyn St. James. A feature story on Lyn will be in the next issue.

A last-minute addition is a visit to Ray Skillman's Classic Cars on Friday night. Although we have not traditionally had an event after our second day on the track, we are excited to accept this offer. As this is a late addition, more information will follow.

Rex Mayes



1958 Rex Mays 100 at Milwaukee with Art Bisch #81, Billy Garrett #43 and Tony Bettenhausen #35 out front. Amin Krueger photo courtesy of Greenfield Gallery / Ralph Hibbard, Jr.

art Bisch asked his crew in victory lane after winning his first Championship Car race at Wisconsin State Fair Park Speedway. The 31-year-old rookie from Phoenix, Ariz. had good reason to ask, he had survived a race long duel with wily veteran Tony Bettenhausen of Tinley Park, Ill. The duo had staged a thrilling battle as the pair diced for the lead. Unfortunately, the last three laps were run under caution. Even though the weather was cool, the action was sizzling as a crowd of 17,097 got their monies worth.

Driving race cars was a dangerous sport back in the day and 1958 was no exception. Gone was popular Indiana driver, Pat O'Connor who was killed in the horrendous multicar crash on the first lap of the Indianapolis 500 the week prior. Taking his spot on the Sumar Racing Team was talented Len Sutton of Portland, Ore. The move opened Sutton's ride in the baby blue Central Excavating Special #81 for Bisch. A native of Mesa, Arizona, Bisch was a 31-year-old WWII veteran and former Navy pilot who had flown torpedo planes off the USS Theodore Roosevelt. Bisch was relatively unknown to many in the Midwest but had built an impressive racing resume back on the dirt tracks in the southwest. When he wasn't racing, Bisch formerly owned a sawmill, but had recently sold it and got in the chroming business in Phoenix. Bisch hustled Bruce Crower's Helse Special into the "500" field after he took some well-heeded advice in finding speed from fellow drivers Jimmy Reece and eventual winner, Jimmy Bryan. However, Bisch's first "500" ended in turn three as he was one of the drivers involved in the tragic first-lap crash.

Bisch and chief mechanic Andy Dunlop quickly figured out the correct set-up as Bisch qualified the Kuzma upright dirt car on the pole for the ninth annual Rex Mays 100 at Milwaukee. On the outside of the front row was young Billy Garrett of Burbank, Calif. In the #43 Chapman Special roadster. Milwaukee fan-favorite, Tony Bettenhausen ("The Tinley Park Express") was lined up third in the #35 Kurtis 4000, another upright dirt car. Even as the low-slung Indy roadsters gained popularity at Indianapolis and paved tracks such as Milwaukee and Trenton, many teams still brought their trusty upright dirt cars to paved ovals.

At the drop of the green flag, Bisch took the lead as Garrett and Bettenhausen battled for second. Veteran drivers, Jimmy Reece, Johnny Boyd and Jim Rathmann also battled in the top 5. Boyd and Garrett continued to battle for third as Bettenhausen chased after Bisch. Minor spins by veteran Eddie Johnson and a youthful A.J. Foyt



Trophy sponsor and donor Bob Wilke of Leader Cards hands Rex Mays 100 trophy to Art Bisch as "Miss Prestone" looks on.

Amin Krueger photo courtesy of Greenfield Gallery / Ralph Hibbard, Jr.

spiced the action. On the 54th lap after Boyd had passed Garrett, the Bakersfield-native spun his Chapman Special hard into the turn three wall, hitting it twice, causing serious injuries. Unfortunately, Garrett's injuries left him in a coma. Garrett eventually recovered however his spinal injuries kept him from ever driving a race car again.

When racing resumed, Bisch and Bettenhausen continued their spirited duel. Bettenhausen surged into the lead, though Bisch would take it back several laps leader. The lead continued to exchange hands. Bettenhausen found himself in the lead with fewer than ten laps to go. Bisch tried several times to pass the stout veteran, finally the determined Bisch passed him on the 93rd lap. Shortly after Bisch took the lead, Dick Rathmann spun out in the south turn. Due to Rathmann's stalled car, the race finished under yellow with the Arizona driver earning \$4,500 for himself and his car owner, out of a total purse of \$18,310. "That Tony's a tough guy to beat," an excited Bisch remarked in victory lane. After the race when asked if he could've had caught Bisch if the green had come out, Bettenhausen said, "I couldn't have caught him anyway. He had too much car."

Tragically, later that summer, Bisch died two days after a July 4th racing crash at Lakewood Park Speedway in Atlanta at the dusty Lakewood mile where Indianapolis 500 winner George Robson died in 1946 and where outlaw big car figure Frank Luptow died during a stock car race in 1952. – *Steve Zautke*

Veteran driver Bill Cheesbourg flew with Bisch to that final race, and the two almost failed to arrive alive. "He had trouble with the airplane," Cheesbourg explains. "Bisch was flying, and we got lost. He was a good pilot, but he got lost somewhere over Arkansas. We just barely made it to the airport and ran out of gas taxiing. But he was a good egg and a good race driver. I also drove his Drake midget for him. He'd go fast in anything he'd get in." After Bisch's Atlanta accident, Cheesbourg continues, "He had the keys to the car in his pocket. I had to hot wire the car to get to the hospital. It didn't seem really serious. We had plans to run a sprint car at Williams Grove the next day. I rode with Mari Hulman and Elmer George. I think Foyt was with us. I called from Williams Grove to see how Bisch was and found out he was dead. They told me it was nothing serious, and that he was just unconscious. He taught me more how to control my temper than anybody. I used to beat him all the time, but he had more fun driving than I did." As told to Terry Reed

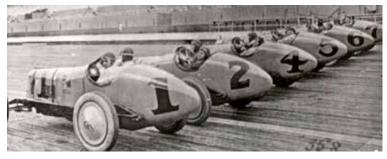


The Miller 8-cylinder 183 Chassis – Part 2

s described in "The Saga of Miller's 4-cylinder 183 Racing Cars" (published in the Winter 2021 Club newsletter), in 1920 Cliff Durant lost all regard for Miller as a race car constructor and was still saying in April 1922 that he would not give Miller \$4 for an engine. But after Jimmy Murphy's win at Indy with the new Miller 183 engine, Durant approached Miller and ordered six identical 183 racing cars.



Historians have debated why Durant would order a fleet of 2-seat 183-engined cars, completed in October, when the formula was already known to be changing to single-seat 122 cu. in. for May 1923. The tale is told best by historian Michael Ferner, but that's a whole article in itself. Durant even ordered four 122s for the next season before he took delivery of his six 183s. At about \$10,000 per car, that's a \$100,000 one-year purchase (about \$2 million today)!



For Durant's 183s, Goossen tweaked his prior "McDonald Special" chassis into a design that became the definitive Miller chassis. The new chassis retained the 104" wheelbase and the 26"-28" C-channel frame rails (now without wood) of the previous 183s but reduced the track from 58" to 56". In profile, Goossen eliminated the previous front





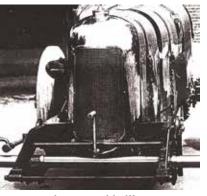
Miller-Durant 183 left, Miller-Durant 122 right, with identical 1882-A front spring horn brackets. Note the rounded radiator shells on both.

and rear frame horn arcs, instead using converging straight lines for frame horns, which became a distinguishing feature of Miller chassis. The Miller-Durant 183 chassis introduced the frame profile, cross members, and brackets that would continue to be used on the 122 and 91 chassis. For example, the 183 front spring horn bracket drawing 1882-A has updates on it for use on the subsequent 122 frame rails.

Because the Miller-Durant 183 chassis appear so visually similar to the subsequent 122s and 91s, many thought that they were the same. With no surviving 183 chassis or body drawings and only one Miller-Durant 183 extant, the Count Louis Zborowski 122/183 Grand Prix car, little was known of the Miller-Durant 183 chassis until I was afforded the opportunity in 2011 to technically analyze the Zborowski car in Germany by then-owner, Stephan Rettenmaier.

From that, measurement and drawing comparisons reveal chassis differences, as shown in the following table:

Date source:	Harold Peters	Factory Drawings
	Miller-Durant 183 (1922)	Miller 122 (1923)
Wheelbase	104	100
Track	56	52
Frame rail height	5½	51/32
Upper rail flange	1½	4¾ tapering to 2
Lower rail flange	1½	1½
Frame thickness	1/8	7/64
Front horn length	15½	14½
Front horn drop	4¾	331/32
Rear kickup	5	41⁄4
Rear horn length	17¼	15¼
Rear horn drop	5	47/32



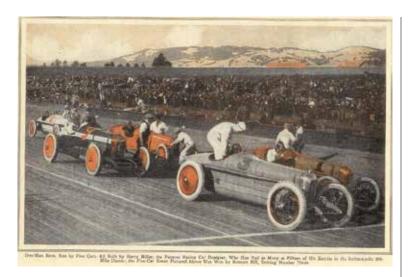
Bevond engine and transmission, there were additional differences from 122s in axles, torque tubes, and brakes. A three-speed transmission with u-joint and yoke torque tube coupling was used. When three of the Miller-Durant cars were modified for entry in the 1923 Monza Grand Prix (2-seat 122 formula), the transmissions were reworked

to 4-speed, a special bellhousing was made to connect the shorter 122 engines to the 183 transmissions, and from the cowl back new bodies were built. And on these 122/183 GP cars Miller used his marque's distinctive peaked radiator shell. (All Durant-financed 183 and 122 Millers have rounded radiators with the Durant emblem on top; it's unknown who originated the peaked design.)

"The Miller 8-cylinder 183 Chassis – Part 1" (published in the Spring 2022 Club newsletter) described the Miller 8-cylinder 183s that predated the Miller-Durant 183 design. This photo from Cotati in October 1922 shows those cars: Hill's #3 McDonald Special, Milton's #8 cross-spring, Vail's #9 Leach Special, Hartz's #12 Miller/Duesenberg

continued on page 4





plus the new Miller-Durant, Murphy's #1. The 100-mile invitational match race was won by Hill.

Most of the Miller-Durant 183 2-seat cars were modified within a few years into single-seat 183 dirt-track racers.

The last factory-built 8-cylinder 183 chassis were one left-hand-drive 2-seat (possibly a rebuilt Miller-Durant), Hal Conlin's #26, and three single-seaters: Tommy Milton's Convertible #5, Leon Duray's dirt-track car #2, and Frank Lockhart's dirt-track car #27. Although they used prior-built 183 engines, these were not as Dees implies, "183 Dirt Track Conversions", but were new Goossen-designed, Millerbuilt, single-seat 8-cylinder 183 chassis. They will be described in "The Miller 8-cylinder 183 Chassis – Part 3". ©2022 Harold Peters



Lets Remember the Blonde Blizzard



adly, Eddie Nicholson for the most part has been forgotten to history. Just one of many drivers who after World War II risked everything for a sport they loved, auto racing. The young driver nicknamed the "Blonde Blizzard" was in a good car, the former "Gus Schrader Special" a Offypowered sprint car whom he purchased the previous winter. The 28-year-old Minneapolis driver was considered an "up and comer" and recently won an IMCA feature race in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Gus Schrader, one of the best sprint car drivers prior to WWII was killed in the car Nicholson was driving. Schrader lost his life in a crash at Shreveport, LA in one of the last races before auto racing was banned in July of 1942.

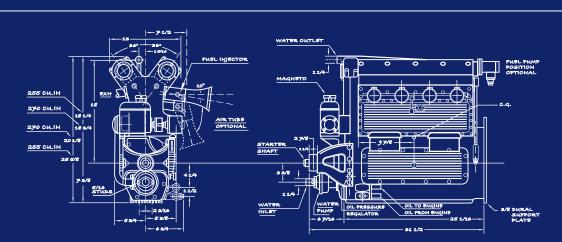
Milwaukee Journal reporter Bob Gilka wrote, "Nobody will ever

PHIL REILLY & CO., INC.



Vintage Automobile Restoration and Preparation

hilreillyco.com









—OFFY-



Geugeot
 MEYER-DRAKE
 SPARKS-THORNE



Harry A. Miller Club News

know why it is a race driver is willing to risk his life for \$60. Sobbing on a bench in a corridor of Wing 3E of Milwaukee County General Hospital on Sunday, the blonde fiancé of Eddie Nicholson did not know. In a room a few feet away, Nicholson 28-year-old dirt track driver lay in critical condition. Nicholson had spun on the north turn of the mile track at State Fair Park, twisted out of control through 40-feet of wood inner guard rail and crashed in the infield. His skull was fractured, and he suffered other serious injuries. If he had won the race, a 10-mile event, he would have received \$60 in prize money."

Nicholson was unconscious for 14 days before succumbing to his injuries on July 22 with his mother and fiancé by his side. Later, future Hall of Fame driver, Deb Snyder purchased and campaigned the car with success. However, the car continued its dark history when in May of 1950, new owner, California driver Bill Anderson crashed hard in a CSRA race at the Mitchell Speedrome and died four days later.

Message From Club President – Tedd Zamjahn

As I'm sure all of you have heard, we have lost an important and close friend of the Harry Miller Club in the passing of Phil Reilly. I had the pleasure of meeting Phil at one of events approximately eight years ago when I had the task of telling him that his driver was going way too fast in his roadster in one of the slow sessions. At the time I had no idea who I was talking to. A week later I saw him directing mechanics under a very large tent at Road America filled with Formula One cars. I then was told who he was and I approached him to apologize for reprimanding him for his fast driver. In typical Phil Reilly gentleman fashion, his response was "you were just doing your job and we were in the wrong". After meeting him, I had several encounters with him at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

A few years later I thought Phil's voice of reason would be an excellent addition to the Board of Directors of the Harry Miller Club. He immediately accepted my invitation and proved to be an important and influential board member. Phil made his mark and will be sorely missed.

There are scheduled renovations to the Milwaukee Mile for preparation for a NASCAR Truck event in August. Because of this, the State Fair Board was not willing nor able to give us a firm date and contract for our meet. After a Zoom Board Meeting, Bill Hoff and I started searching for an alternate site. We came up with Lucas Oil Raceway (IRP) which is west of Indianapolis. Their oval does not have high bank turns and is .7 of a mile in length. Because of drag racing commitments on every weekend, they were able to give us Thursday and Friday, July 6 & 7. They will open their gates on Wednesday, July 5th so we can arrive on that day and have our annual barbecue that evening. Our Board of Directors feel having our meet near Indianapolis will be our best option. I hope to see all you there.

Best wishes, Tedd Zamjahn **Philip H. Reilly** 1943 – 2022

Love and Gratitude

Phil Reilly & Company "God hates a chicken." PHR

"Peak Performance— Our Primary Passion"

Tom Malloy – Owner Ed Pink Racing Engines

You're invested in the ultimate performance of your racing car engine. Don't risk that finely-tuned race car to an amateur. Ed Pink Racing Engines—with over half a century of success in motorsports racing—offers a one-stop source for:

- Race engine design
- Customized parts for any engineincluding reverse engineering to reproduce out-of-stock components
- State of the art service and testing

Our seasoned staff of technicians and race engine designers has over 200 combined years of experience—unique in the industry.



818.785.674(RacingEngines con

14612 Raymer St., Van Nuys, CA 91405





Philip H Reilly





David Uihlein introduced me to Phil, and we shared a burger and a beer while discussing the 2003 Harry Miller Event. Phil was a staunch supporter of the Miller Club, both as a sponsor and annual entrant. He always had a smile and kind word no matter how busy he was! Phil will be greatly missed by his fellow Miller Board and Club members.

Lenore Heinzelmann

Phil was always a gentleman on and off the track. I'm not sure most of us truly appreciate the significant contributions his life's work made to the Vintage motorsports world. He was a valuable member of the club board as well. He was seldom the first person to speak on a topic but often the last - his insights were that good. God speed Phil...

Bill Hoff

I will always remember Phil for his automotive expertise, character, and wonderfully dry sense of humor. Most folks know what a giant he was in our old car hobby. But few may know how much help and support he would extend to others. In spite of his wealth of knowledge, he was always learning. He patiently endured my questions and always pointed me in the right direction. Surprising me, he sometimes said "Tom, I don't know the answer to that..... but let's find the solution together". I never heard Phil Reilly ever say a mean word about anyone. He was a peacemaker. I always have and will continue to strive to be like this exceptional man. So long Berkeley Boy!

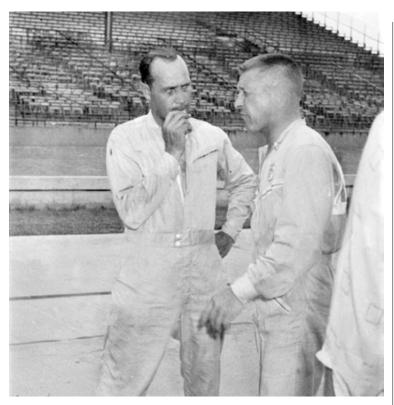






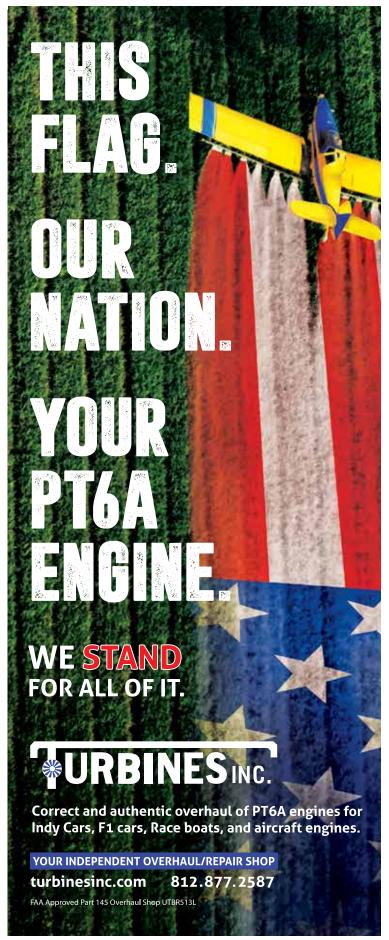


(Harry A. Miller Club News)



Bill Homeier chats with Tony Bettenhausen during practice at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in May of 1959. Homeier tried several cars that year but was unable to crack the top-33 fastest. IMS-Photo



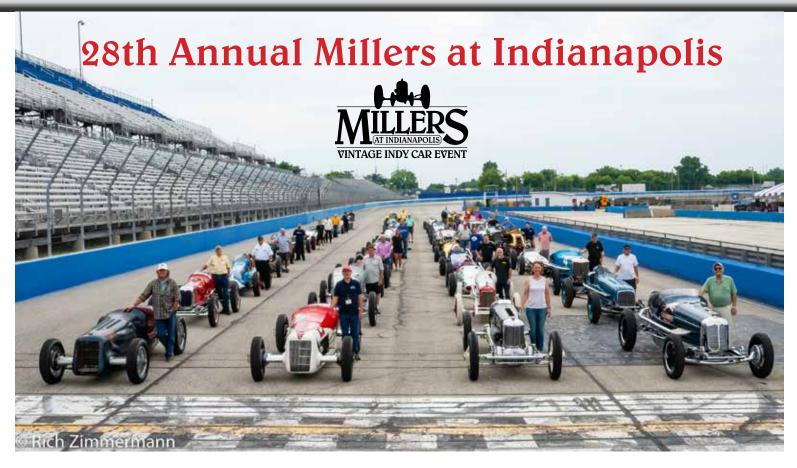




The Harry A. Miller Club

P.O. Box 539 • Big Bend • WI • 53103

Tel (414) 403-7697 • harrymillerclub.com E-mail: theharrymillerclub@gmail.com



About The Harry A. Miller Club



Hary Willer

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 1920s, winning 39 Indianapolis 500 races!

To Join the Harry A. Miller Club

Membership is \$50 US, \$60 Canada. 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 539 Big Bend, WI 53103

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 414-403-7697. The fee for new members and renewal, is \$50 US and \$60 Canada.

Harry A. Miller Club Board of Directors

Chairman of the Board: Dana Mecum Office, 262- 275-5050

President: Tedd Zamjahn Office, 414-403-7697

Directors:
Tom Barbour
Brian Brunkhorst
Brent Castle
Bill Hoff
Carrol Jensen
Tom Malloy
Bob McConnell
Phil Reilly

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: Carrol Jensen.

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 May 15, 2023.

