

Harry A. Miller Club News



Millers at Milwaukee to spend one more year in Indianapolis!

Due to continued construction in anticipation of the weekend long Indy Car event in late August, please join us at the Lucas Oil Indianapolis Raceway Park (IRP) June 21 and June 22, 2024



Message From Club President – Tedd Zamjahn

Breaking News

After several years of discussion of additional vehicles for our Harry Miller Club Meet, our board of directors have decided to allow rear engine Offenhauser and Meyer/Drake race cars, only authentic, no questions asked, Indianapolis type cars will be included at our event.

This decision was brought about by a chance meeting with Rick and Jacques Dresang and me. We had a discussion at their annual holiday party at the Kettle Moraine Preservation and Restoration facility. As some of you may know, the Dresang's are heavily involved with Gurney Eagles. Interestingly, our founder, Dave Uihlein, had a discussion with Rick Dresang approximately 15 years ago about bringing one of their cars to our meet. After some consideration, Dave decided it was too early to introduce rear engine cars to our club. We have now decided the time has come to invite these cars into our meet.

The following restrictions will be strictly enforced:

- The race car must be an authentic Offenhauser and/or Meyer/Drake Indianapolis car. The car must be originally built as a race car, powered by one of these engines, and must not be modified from a car born with a different power plant. The club will use the knowledge

of both Jacques Dresang and our very own Steve Zautke to verify their historic originality.

- Unlike other cars at our events, the Offenhauser and Meyer/Drake cars will be inspected by a qualified tech inspector.

- Please note - the acceptance of these cars will be contingent on ONLY ONE assigned registered driver. There will be no "musical chairs" of drivers as we allow with our other cars. I'm sure we all agree it takes special training to be able to handle a race car of this type.

- These race cars will have only one half hour morning session and one half hour afternoon session. Only the rear engine cars will be allowed on the track during these time slots. NO Exceptions!

I am very excited about the inclusion of what I consider to be very significant Offenhauser and Meyer/Drake race cars running at our event. After all, the lineage starts with Peugeot, then Miller, Offenhauser's and finally Meyer/Drake race cars. As with all clubs, we need to reach out to younger enthusiasts to keep our club active and viable. I hope you all will agree.

Happy New Year to all and I look forward to seeing everyone this summer in Indianapolis.

Tedd Zamjahn



Harry Miller Quits Racing – To Build Stock Cars – Part 2

The previous Club newsletter (Fall, 2023) carried the dramatic July 1, 1923, LA Times announcement that Harry Miller was to quit racing and instead build stock (road) cars: an 8-cylinder 183 cu. in. large car and a 4-cylinder 91 cu. in. small car. Further announcements followed and were carried by newspapers across the country, outlining plans and details.

On August 8, 1923, the LA Times carried an article stating that, "Letters from friends all over the United States have been pouring into the Miller Engine Works since the announcement by Harry A. Miller of plans to build two stock cars equipped with racing engines under his own name. ...the greater surprise and interest was created by his disclosure of plans to make also a vertical "4" with 100-inch wheelbase and high gasoline economy."

Four days later, on August 12, the LA Times published an article written by Miller titled, "Boosts Safety Feature", in which he lauded four-wheel brakes as, "...the largest single contributor to traffic safety..." and went on to say, "There is no doubt in my mind that within a year all the prominent automobile manufacturers in the United States will be building cars with this excellent feature included as stock equipment. The vertical 8 which I intend to bring out next fall will have four-wheel brakes by all means."

The same LA Times page carried another article announcing Miller's latest invention, "An electric automatic fan operated thermostatically, a device which may result in revolutionizing the cooling of motor cars, is to be one of the efficiency features of the new stock model Miller Vertical Eight and also of the smaller Vertical Four. This was disclosed yesterday at the Miller Engine Works where...the first of the commercial passenger cars which will be built under his name, is rapidly taking shape. As explained by the motor maker, the average fan on an automobile runs very slowly while idling and in traffic at times when cooling is needed the most, and when the car is traveling at high speed and creating enough wind so that a fan is not needed, the fan whirls at a terrific rate. 'I have obviated this difficulty,' Mr. Miller said, 'by designing an electrically controlled automatic fan for the Miller Vertical Eight and Four which

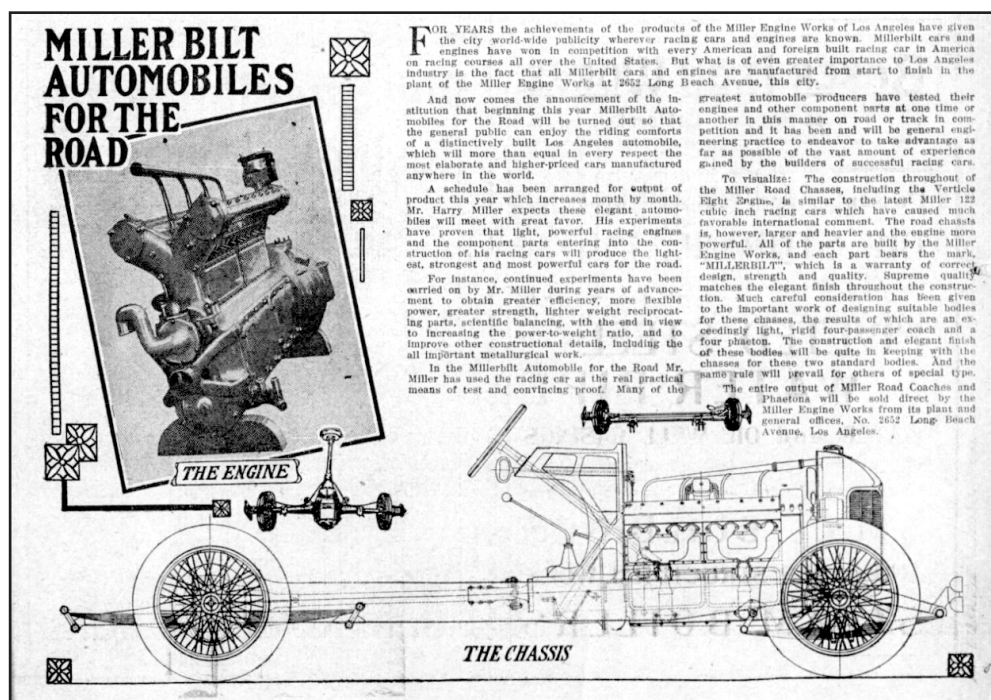


Image 1. LA Times, January 1, 1924.

will not rotate till the water system reaches a temperature sufficiently hot to work the thermostat control."

The article went on to say, "It is stated that orders have already been placed for Miller cars by three prominent Americans – all three being men whose names are known wherever the English language is read. The first of the cars, though nearing completion, will probably not be given the finishing touches and delivered until sometime in the fall. The eight-cylinder car with 183 cubic inch racing motor will weigh 2400 pounds, will develop 120 horsepower..."

Also in the previous Club newsletter, on December 16, 1923, the LA Times reported that, "The home-bred engineer has been commissioned by Cliff Durant to build three 183 cubic inch engines and shortly after the first of the year he is to jog East with these products under his arm, and they are to be put in stock cars. It is broadly hinted that Miller is to become an advisory engineer for the huge Durant factories, but neither he nor anyone connected with the Durant interest has made any announcement to that effect."

Shortly thereafter, on January 1, 1924, the LA Times carried this feature article, "Millerbilt Automobiles for the Road" (Image 1). It is worth commenting on the significant detail and information in this narrative, drawing, and photo.

In the narrative, it is interesting that products from Miller's factory are called Millerbilt and that "MILLERBILT" will be marked on each part of this road car. Inspections of original Miller racing parts show that some have a factory circular stamp, but that stamp says, "Miller Built".

As stated in the LA Times July 1, 1923, article, the four-passenger coach and phaeton were to be built by the Walter M. Murphy coachbuilder.

The chassis drawing shows an enlarged normal 122 racing frame for the front-half but a new rear-half design containing a split frame rail that passes over and under the rear axle. Careful removal of the wheel wires, brake drum, and differential in the drawing reveals the over-under frame design (Image 2).

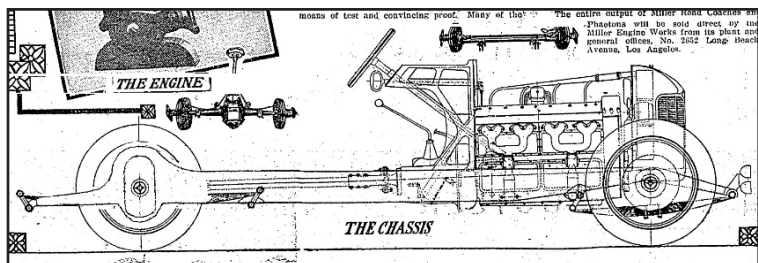


Image 2. Road car over-under rear frame detail.

The unique rear chassis design continues with an underslung location of the rear springs (below the axle), which Miller never used on any other design. The underslung design also shows unique rear frame horns and rear spring front mounts used with Miller's normal two-shackle rear spring mounting. The front spring design follows standard 122 racing chassis design.

A stock 183 engine is shown but with unusual left-side exhaust (as used on the 183 Convertible). Examination of the drawing shows the steering column and steering box in dotted lines, which indicates it is on the left-hand side of the engine. Inside the radiator is the newly invented electric thermostatically operated fan.

The function of the large handle extending out from the dash, apparently connected to a vertical shaft just on the other side of the firewall, is a mystery – perhaps for an exhaust cutout?

A stock 122 transmission is shown with a 183-to-122 engine-to-transmission adapter as used by Haugdahl and Lockart (and likely others) in their dirt-track 183/122 single-seat racing cars. But, interestingly, the transmission to torque-tube connection is a 183 yoke style, not a 122 ball-joint style.

Careful scaling and comparison of this drawing's 183 engine to actual 183 engine dimensions produces these chassis dimensions:

- 116" wheelbase
- 29" wheels
- 7.25" mid-frame height
- 40.625" height at radiator shell.

The article's photos of a real engine and axles unexpectedly show a 122 engine and 122 axles – not 183 components.

But this is not just any 122 engine: it is specifically the one-off 122 powertrain built for Durant's personal 122 of late 1923, the first 122 wide-frame design. This powertrain was unique with a vertical distributor at rear of engine, a steering box mounted on the top of the bellhousing, and a long-housing side-shifted 4-speed transmission (Image 3).

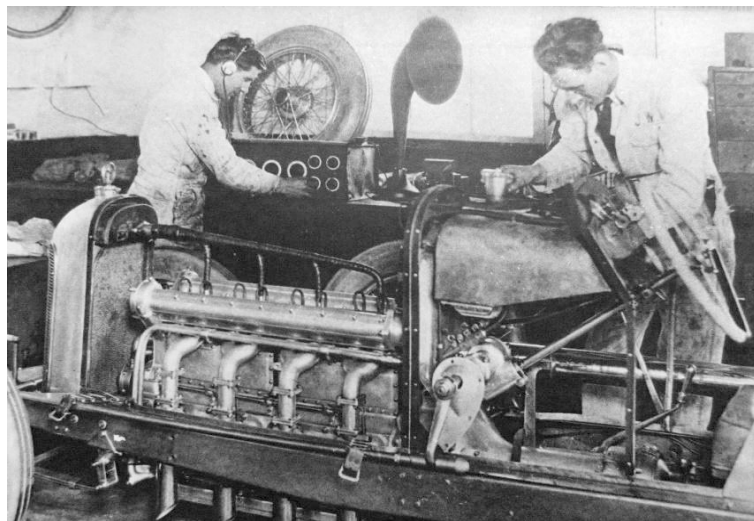


Image 3. Cliff Durant's 1923 122 wide-frame.

Considering that Miller and Durant were claimed to be partners in this road car venture, it is unsurprising that the announcement would showcase Durant's unique powertrain.

Remarkably, this article is the last of anything found about this venture, both for the Vertical Eight and Vertical Four proposals. As was the intention, the Vertical Four would have been a superlative contemporary of Europe's best 1.5-litre sports cars and the Vertical Eight the contemporary of Europe's best 3-litre sports coupes and sedans.

Surely there must have been component and body designs drawn, both at Miller and Murphy, and the LA Times reported one car was nearly completed, but nothing beyond these articles has yet been discovered. Unfortunately, this venture foreshadowed Miller's future road car designs that also never materialized, or if built were one-off disappointments.

And this is where Miller differed so significantly from his European counterparts: concurrently with the best racing cars, they built tens, even hundreds, of the finest road cars. What an inflection point this venture was for American single-marque sports and racing car production, its failure portending decades of subsequent attempts by lesser players, which even if successful were only briefly. Had Miller and Durant been successful, it would have created the possibility that we could have had an American marque equivalent to Alfa Romeo, Jaguar, Ferrari, or Bugatti.

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To Please A Lady

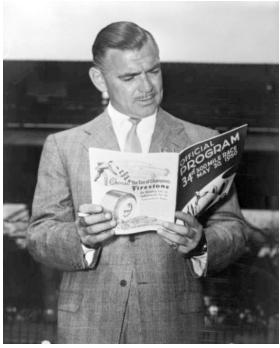


Gable greets driver Flaherty after he qualified the Granatelli Sabourin Special. Brothers Andy (left) and Vince and Joe are also shown in background. IMS photo

With the success of *Ford Vs. Ferrari*, *Gran Turismo* and the current film, *Ferrari*, auto racing movies are seeing a resurgence not seen since the late-1960's when Grand Prix with James Garner, *Winning* with Paul Newman and the 1970 film, *LeMans* with Steve McQueen hit the big screens. One auto racing-themed film that gets overlooked is the 1950 release, *To Please*



Clark Gable poses with his "double" Bud Rose. As many did 'back in the day' Rose's real name was, Harry "Butch" Eisele, and had an uncanny resemblance to Gable. According to historian, Donald Davidson, "They became good friends and Gable was said to have been quite disappointed when Rose chose to continue racing rather than accept an offer to be the actor's full-time 'double.'" IMS Photo



During the month of May, Gable immersed himself with everything relating with the Indianapolis 500, reading up on the sport, chatting with AAA officials and VIPs and especially bonded with many of the drivers and mechanics. IMS Photo



Clark Gable is seated as Ms. Stanwyck pose next to the Merz Engineering Kurtis 2000 driven in the race by Sam Hanks. IMS Photo

a Lady starring Clark Gable and Barbara Stanwyck. The movie filmed in black & white, focuses on driver "Mike Brannan" whose career takes him from racing midjets at Gilmore Stadium in Los Angeles, who became an outcast due to a fatal accident, then must find work as an outlaw stunt driver, then back in big leagues, racing

a "big car" racing at Arlington Downs Raceway and then finally the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

The film is interesting but predictable on several fronts, there's the usual over-dramatization of accidents and the period footage

continued on page 6

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The Miller Club appreciates all of the support provided over the years to help sustain our annual event. This year's location in Indianapolis is a little more expensive than normal and we would appreciate any additional support. There are various levels of sponsorship participation, which are outlined below. Please consider one of these opportunities, or if you know of a related business that would like to take advantage of the promotional benefits offered, we would be happy to provide additional information.

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3 newsletters, and link on Miller Website

Friends of the Miller Club - \$100 and above

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Barbara Stanwyck is presented with a pair of gold Champion Spark Plug earrings, left-right, J.F. Lewis, Jr. VP of Champion, veteran driver Babe Stapp and Harry Wismer, Sports director at ABC. IMS Photo

of racing at Gilmore Stadium is unnecessarily sped up. However, Brannan's search for redemption and somewhat surprisingly for 1950 is Stanwyck in a powerful female role that helped push this film across the finish line.

Gable was all in on this project. Prior to filming, he immersed himself in the "month of May" at Indianapolis. Bringing his longtime studio pal director, Clarence Brown along with cameraman, Harold Rosson whom helped his "afterhours adult beverage" intake and card games. This was his second trip to the Speedway as he was a guest of track owner, Tony Hulman in 1947.

According to former IMS Historian Donald Davidson, *"Clark Gable was quite passionate about making To Please a Lady and it shows in the finished product. He had regularly attended races at the famed Legion Ascot Speedway in Alhambra, California in the early and mid-1930s---he presented the Clark Gable Gold Cup to winner Rex Mays on September 12, 1934---and that is where he first met Wilbur Shaw in 1932. The two of them also shared a common interest in flying, Gable taking lessons at around the same time Shaw was partners in a West Coast air charter company and coincidentally tutoring James Stewart, who starred in 1935's Speed."*

Milwaukee Mile historian Al Krause was in Indianapolis in 1950 with promotor and boss, Tom Marchese. Krause told me he was surprised how accommodating Gable and later, Stanwyck was to not only them, but many in the pits and garage area and even to fans around the grounds. Krause recollected to me, *"Stanwyck didn't have any snobbery...she appeared to be quite down to earth."*

The attention to detail by the film crew was vast, for example, when "500" starter Seth Klein who always wore a suit and tie showed up in the afternoon on Mother's Day with a white carnation, it was noticed by the movie staff he had changed suits from the morning practice. He was promptly sent home to change.

Gable is seen in the yearly panoramic photo that was taken on race day. After everyone was released, Gable walked back to his "car" the 1948 Kurtis 2000 Wolfe Spl. which was driven by Joie Chitwood in the "500." They filmed a pre-race scene on race day in real time, in

which Stanwyck calls out to Gable, and they meet at the fence. In the background, with the massive race day crowd, you can see the drivers walking to their race cars and since it was in 'real time' all the crew had time for was one take.

Gable's 'movie' car ran in the two previous 500's as the Don Lee Spl. with Californian Mack Hellings as the driver. MGM had purchased the car from the Lee estate to use in the film. It was made up to resemble the #17 Wolfe Motor



L-R, Chief Mechanic Clay Smith, driver Walt Faulkner, car owner J.C. Agajanian pose with Gable at Indianapolis. IMS Photo

Company Spl. that Chitwood had qualified. According to Davidson, *"In those days before the mandatory use of uniforms, Chitwood was obliged to arrive on race morning dressed in exact duplicates of the gray slacks and blue polo shirt Gable had been wearing for his scenes during the preceding days."*

Sharp viewers will notice the recently retired driver Cliff Bergere in the film dressed as a track guard who keeps Stanwyck from the track. Will Geer who played Gable's midget race car mechanic in the first part of the film was born in nearby Frankfort, IN.

Donaldson recalled *"Johnnie Parsons, the 1949 AAA National Champion, was named the film's technical adviser and he hit it off with both Gable and Stanwyck. As it turned out, he gave them plenty to cheer about as the race wore on. This was the fourth year for Borg-Warner Corporation to supply a Hollywood actress for the purpose of greeting the winner in Victory Lane and it was decided to take advantage of Miss Stanwyck's presence and give her double duty. She was beside herself with joy when who should wheel in at the conclusion of the rain-shortened event but Parsons."*

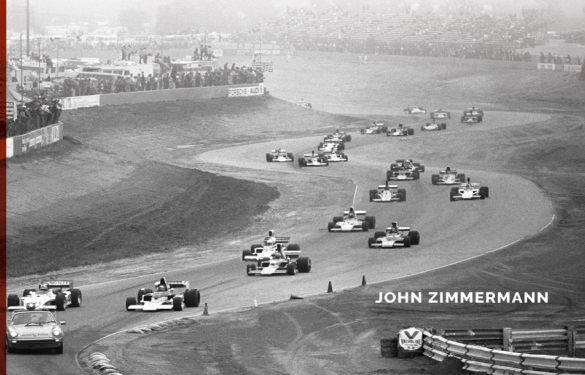
Donaldson adds, *"There is a little side story that when Parsons was celebrating with his wife, team members and sponsors later that night at a private dinner downtown at the Claypool Hotel, there was a knock on the door. A female voice was heard inquiring as to whether Johnnie Parsons was in the room and no sooner had she been told, 'I'm sorry, ma'am, this is a private function,' then Parsons came to her rescue by calling out, 'Hey, let her in. That's Barbara Stanwyck.'"*

The film was released later that year on October 13th. Running an comfortable 91-minutes, it features dated quotes like, *"Sure. I told you, remember? Most dames are out for a few laughs, a couple of drinks."* But fortunately, had no computer graphics images/imagery. It's one of Mario Andretti's favorite movies, as he saw the movie as a boy while still in Italy and was the first time he heard the word "Indianapolis."

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LOST IN TIME

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Lost in Time

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Formula 5000 in North America

By John Zimmermann

During the 1960s and 1970s, American road racing flourished, with hard-fought championships for the CanAm, the TransAm and last but not least the Formula 5000 series. Built around the idea of a standard engine size for American V-8s, Formula 5000 attracted entries from well-known teams such as Dan Gurney, Jim Hall, Carl Haas, Parnelli Jones, Roger Penske and Carl Hogan.

Drivers in Formula 5000 represented a who's who of available talent, including a host of stars from Europe, Canada and the United States. Mark Donohue, Mario Andretti, Brian Redman, Peter Gethin, both Al and Bobby Unser, Sam Posey and numerous others all went nose to tail for the Championship.

In this volume John Zimmermann's excellent round-up of Formula 5000 provides the first comprehensive overview of all the elements of this great racing series. Fully researched and extensively illustrated provides an essential history for students of racing history and fans alike, a must for the true enthusiast.

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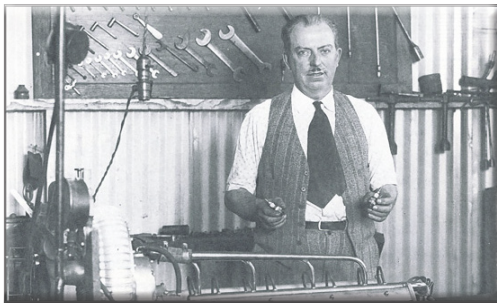
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Millers at Milwaukee to spend one more year in Indianapolis! June 21 and June 22, 2024



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 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

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.

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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: 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 April 15, 2024.