

Harry A. Miller Club News



Can't Wait To See You At The Milwaukee Mile!

Coming Back to Milwaukee! It was nice to keep our event going for two years at IRP while updates were in progress at the Milwaukee Mile. But it's hard to forget the unbearable heat on the asphalt last year with no shade...anywhere.

The good news is that since we are back in Milwaukee, we will again have tents! With that, there is the press building on the infield that is air conditioned with restrooms. Along with these amenities, we will have the more complete food service that we had in past years. Since a big part of this annual event is the friends we see, it sure is nice to sit and have lunch in a shady tent together during our noon break.

One of the additional changes this year is a benefit of returning to a full Mile track. The rear engine Offys were static display last year due to the smaller size of the IRP track but will run exhibition laps this year on track by themselves. These cars complete the story of the Miller engines. We will have a chance to see and hear them run, but not interfere with the normal schedule of front engine cars as they will run twice each day in their own session.

We are fortunate to have the oldest continuously running racetrack in the world and it is wonderful that we can showcase the complete story of these cars on it.

Much of logistics will return as they were before. You will have ample rig parking on the infield, and the ability to come and go as you please via the undertrack tunnel. Come join us and celebrate our 30th Anniversary run!



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Message From Club President – Tedd Zamjahn

Hello Harry Miller Club members.

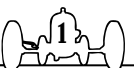
I hope you enjoyed the past holiday season and like myself, are looking forward to the 30th Harry Miller Club meet at the Historic Milwaukee Mile. I am sure you feel like I do, after two years away it will feel good to be able to stretch our legs in our cars on the Milwaukee Mile track.

As you have probably heard, Carrol Jensen has organized a new hotel west of the track for our overnight accommodation as well as the barbeque and banquet. It is a great location with a large parking area and gives us something else new to look forward to!

Please get your registration forms in early, along with any additional supporting donations. As with everything else, expenses for the event have gone up.

Looking forward to seeing all of you June 26 - 28 in Milwaukee.

Tedd



Harry Miller – A Contemporary Account

Mark Dees summarizes Harry Miller's early life, from multiple sources, in the first chapter of his book, *The Miller Dynasty*. Of interest to the Club members may be this unedited excerpt from a contemporary account of Miller, by William F. Sturm, published in *Motor Life*, July 1924.

"His racing cars are perfect specimens of the master craftsman's art. Every part is machined to a scale that we would make a watchmaker envious. Lightness and perfect balance of the reciprocating parts is the secret of speed in racing cars – and Miller cars have the speed. "From Brickyard to Racing Fame" might be a good title for the story of this most famous maker of racing cars. The story of Miller's uphill climb might really be an exemplification of the truth of the old adage that if you build a good mouse trap, the world will finally trample your lawn in telling you about it. And, that keeping eternally at it brings success. Miller was born in Menominee, Wisconsin in 1875. During vacation time, when he was thirteen or fourteen years old, he worked in a brickyard "edging" brick, that is, turning them over to dry in the sun. He worked at the brickyard because an old, battered engine, used to stir the clay mixture, fascinated him. He loafed around it at every opportunity.

Machinery was eventually Harry's undoing. In the fall, when he went back to school, he used to pass a machine shop. After a time he conceived the brilliant idea of working in the shop instead of going to school. That is why his school life stopped early, at the eighth grade.

By the time he reached the age of seventeen Harry had tinkered on practically every machine in Menominee. He made the old ones new, and the new ones run even better. Then he shook the dust off Menominee from his feet and started west, intent on stopping at a place where there was more machinery to tinker with. His first stop was at Ogden, Utah, where he went to work running a hydraulic pressed-brick machine. Then he heard that over at Pocatello, Idaho, a man was needed to run the electric light plant. He bent his steps towards Pocatello.

From there he drifted back home to Menominee. Then on to San Francisco. This was in the early nineties and business was not so good and the young man had to eat even before he could run engines. He took a job with a surveyor's gang on the Sutro Railroad. As soon as he had saved enough money to get to Los Angeles, he went there. Bicycle repairing was his first job. It wasn't just what he wished to do, but it had to do with tools of a sort. Later he ran a bicycle and gun repair shop in Santa Monica, while he was marking time, waiting for the Fates to come along and tap him on the shoulder and tell him what he really should be doing.

He married about this time and went to San Francisco to

get steady work with Leavitt & Bill, which company had the first motorcycle agency in San Francisco. Harry didn't like the way the motorcycle engine was built, so he designed one. But business was so dull that he failed to sell his idea.

In the late nineties Miller opened an auto repair shop in Los Angeles. The Yale automobile factory at Toledo, Ohio, heard how he could, by laying hands on sick automobiles, make them once more resume their duties. In a year he was in Toledo as the machine shop foreman and tester for the Yale. The testing gave him the racing fever and he signed up with the Oldsmobile racing team for one of the early Vanderbilt Cup Races, to ride as mechanic with Ernie Keeler. Harry didn't like the way carburetors acted, so he went back to the west coast, determined to build carburetors that would work satisfactorily. In 1907, he made 500 for the Lozier Company. Then the Interstate Company asked him to make carburetors for them. Business got so good that Miller organized a company. He finally sold the concern to a capitalist who signed him up as the superintendent for a factory in Indianapolis. Joe Dawson won the 1912 500-mile race while Miller was in the Hoosier capital.

Being unable to agree with the owner of the carburetor company, Miller left and went back to the coast, and once more took up carburetor manufacturing on his own hook. In those early days Miller carburetors meant efficiency plus.

When Barney Oldfield decided he wanted a new motor for his DeLage racing car Miller told him he could build one. He did. Christopherson, the aviator, wanted an aviation motor. Miller built it. Other race drivers began wanting Miller motors. Harry built them. Soon Miller was kept busy building motors. That was what he had wanted to do all the time!

He was pigheaded, Harry was. At least that's what the boys said because he refused to build motors any way except his own way. He would not use any cheap material. He spent days machining parts and hunting for the very best material. He was making motors better balanced and lighter as to reciprocating parts than had ever been built. When the boys grumbled at the cost, he told them he knew only one way to build motors and he would have to have his way or not to build them. He also made various sage remarks to the effect that it did not matter so much what a motor cost as it did how much could be made with it after the first cost. There was only one outcome – Miller built the motors.

As his fame as a carburetor and motor builder spread, Miller's machine shop grew. About two years ago he began making the racing cars from stem to stern, with few exceptions as to parts. The exceptions were valves, valve springs, ignition units, wheels, tires.

Building winning race cars was not his whole business. In



fact, it is only his hobby. Besides his hobby he builds motors for a Japanese syndicate. [Author's note: No other reference to this Japanese work has been found.] He does a great deal of experimentation for large automobile concerns who may wish to develop a new engine and feel that it can be done better by Miller than by their own engineering staff.

Harry Miller's success has not come in a day. It has been a long, hard pull. But he is comfortable now. About once a month he gets an offer to become chief engineer for an automobile factory. But he can't stand it to be cramped. He has a job of his own. He has a fine machine shop and a good corps of workmen. He can go and come as he pleases. There's no efficiency expert to point out that the cost of the car is mounting. Miller looks first at perfect material and workmanship and at cost second. He puts a lot of time in making connecting rods for racing cars, for instance. They retail for \$65 each. A Ford connecting rod costs, retail, \$1.20. Miller's rods are works of art. Each one weighs exactly the same as it's neighbor. That is one reason why a Miller motor revolving at 5000 revolutions a minute has practically no vibration.

Harry Miller is not rich. But he is his own boss and has money enough so that he can reach out occasionally and help a young fellow trying to get on in the world. And that, after all, is a greater thing than making fast cars.”

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Have You Considered Club Sponsorship?

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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Chuck Weyant – From the Short Tracks to the Big Show

In the post-war era up until the 1970s, the Indianapolis 500 was dominated by drivers who cut their teeth on the dirt tracks of America. Most drivers drove both the popular midget and sprint cars, some excelled in one or the other, while the great ones excelled in both. Drivers like Troy Ruttman, Bob Sweikert, A.J. Foyt, Jim Hurtubise and Parnelli Jones excelled in the 'big cars.' Others like Sam Hanks, Duke Nalon, Johnnie Parsons, Rodger Ward and Bill Vukovich proved their mettle driving the tricky midget race cars. Another driver who excelled in the midgets was Chuck Weyant.



Chuck Weyant made his first Indianapolis 500 in 1955 driving a Federal Engineering Kurtis 3000D and finished in 12th place. – IMS photo



Making the Indianapolis 500 usually was the difference between a family having good or a bad year. You can see the emotion from Chuck Weyant after he successfully made the “500” in 1957 on the final day of time trials. Weyant tried to qualify the Jim Robbins Spl. but was frustrated after being unable to get the car up to qualifying speed. Weyant was preparing to return to Springfield when the son of the car owner Pete Salemi approached him about qualifying their ride. He was on the track when the final gun went off at 6 p.m., but he qualified fast enough, finishing 14th that year.

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Born in St. Mary's, Ohio, Weyant was brought up in auto racing. In a 2007 interview he explained, "My dad always had race cars," reminisced Weyant. "There were always four or five guys around working on them. I loved hanging out there. My bedtime in those days was whenever I fell asleep in the seat of a race car." He continued, "I bought a midget when I was working at the shoe factory." Weyant spotted a midget sitting on a used car lot. "It had the number seven on it, but didn't have a motor in it. I paid five dollars a week for it, he wanted \$300." Weyant was ecstatic, spending every moment prepping it, but then the war came.

Bob Gates wrote in a 2023 article for Speed Sport, "While other guys carried photos of their wives or girlfriends through the war, I carried a photo of my little red race car. Weyant who was in the Army Air Corps remembered, "When things got tough, I would pull it out to look at or show to my buddies. "I bet I pulled that photo out a thousand times," chuckled Weyant, "reminding myself, and describing to the guys what I was going to do when I got back home."

For many Championship Car owners, the debate continued in AAA and later USAC, should I hire a charging sprint car driver or a smooth midget driver? Many drivers like Ted Hartley and later his son Gene who both came up through the midget ranks, despite not being in frontline equipment, usually were able to get that borderline car into "the show" at Indianapolis. Drivers like Art Cross, Bill Homeier, Chuck Rodee and Shorty Templeman were also

smooth midget drivers known to figure out that ill-handling car. But one size does not fit all, others like Rex Easton, Nalon, or Vukovich who came up from the midget ranks were quite the chargers in their own right.

You had to 'earn' your stripes in Indy Car racing in the 1950s and 1960s. Like many, Weyant's first attempts to even make a championship car race were difficult and yielded six DNQ's at tracks like Milwaukee and Detroit before he got his initial top 10 at DuQuion in 1953. Weyant got two more top 10s the following year on the dirt at Las Vegas and Phoenix.

Weyant finally made the starting 33 at Indianapolis in 1955, making the show in Russ Snowberger's Federal Engineering Special, eventually finishing 12th. Weyant stated in the 2007 interview, "I dreamed about driving at Indianapolis from the time I was a kid. I got my first ride there in 1954 (DNQ). It wasn't a great one, but I jumped at the chance."

His biggest win came later that summer driving for the legendary Johnny Pawl, winning the 1955 Hut Hundred midget car race at Terre Haute.

Back then, making the show at Indianapolis was the difference between having a good year or a bad year. Weyant recalls, "For 1956, he had a ride lined up in the well-regarded Frank Curtis roadster. But also driving Curtis' sprint car, he flipped and broke his arm during an April race in Reading, PA.

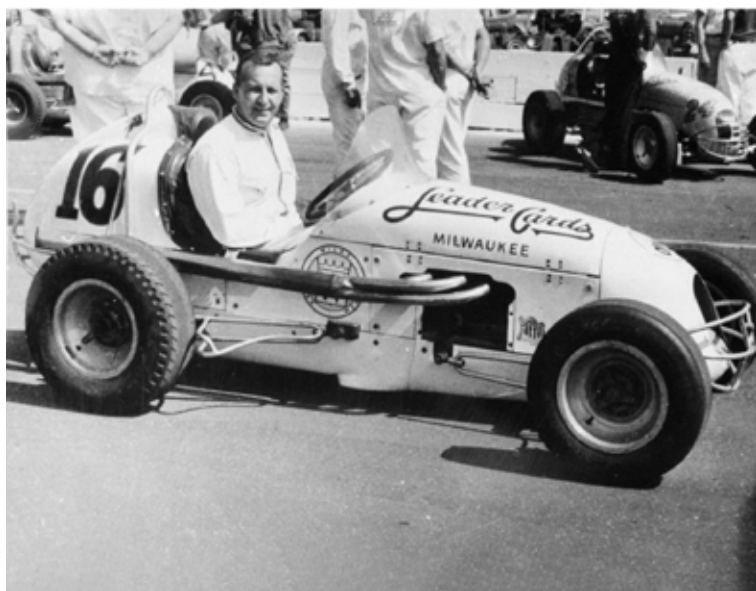
"In those days if you didn't race, you didn't eat." Especially anxious
continued on pg 6



1957 Indianapolis 500 Chuck Weyant (Central Excavating #82) leads Johnny Thomson (D-A Lubricant Spl. #10) into turn one. Brownie Brown photo



Chuck Weyant in the Dunn Engineering #89 which was Harry Dunn's homebuilt roadster, wrenched by Jess Alu. Built in 1957, Weyant drove it the following year at Indianapolis, while running 13th, Weyant ran over debris causing the right rear tire to blow. Hitting the third turn wall, Weyant spun across the track ending up hitting the dirt embankment on the inside of the track. He escaped injury. - IMS Photo



Weyant was in his natural element driving the midgets. Here he has a first-class ride in Bob Wilke's Leader Cards Special at Milwaukee in 1960. Armin Krueger photo courtesy of Greenfield Gallery

to get back to racing after missing Indy, five weeks after he broke his arm, Weyant showed up again at Reading in the Curtis sprint car. He fabricated an arm guard out of a tin beer can which protected his cast and arm. He was leading when halfway through the event his arm began to hurt, and he faded to ninth place. "I had tears in my eyes afterward it hurt so bad," confessed Weyant.

Chuck went on to drive for several car owners, although he drove the most Championship Car races in the Dunn Engineering Special. Weyant made the "500" for the Dunn team in 1957 and chalked up his best finish of his career in the 200-mile race at Milwaukee (eighth place) in 1959.

At 39-years old, Weyant made his last run at Indianapolis in 1962. Assigned to the aging Jim Robbins' No. 91 roadster, Weyant was not able to get the archaic car up to speed. A younger Jim Hurtubise (29-years old) with no practice hustled the car into the race in the last hour of qualifying.

Chuck went on to win 13 AAA / USAC National Midget race car features, his last in 1962. Additionally, Weyant tallied 64 midget car features across many sanctioning bodies, racing midgets intermittently until 1971.

Like many drivers, he was a tradesman, being a retired member of Sheet Metal Workers Local 218. Also, member of Springfield Sports Hall of Fame, and in 2003 inducted in the National Midget Racing Hall of Fame. Chuck also owned several bars in Springfield, but it was noted, the most popular and the place to be on a Friday and Saturday night was Chuck Weyant's Holiday Inn on Peoria Road.

At the time of his death in 2017 Weyant was the oldest living Indianapolis 500 driver, passing away at the age of 93.

Weyant summed it, "Here you are a little old midget driver and you get to race in the Indianapolis 500 ... unbelievable."

Thanks to State Journal-Register, Greg Littleton, Bob Gates and Speed Sport for their assistance with this article.

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Harry Miller Club Member Dave Wilton from Prescott AZ has some great Miller books for sale. Please contact him via email at wiltonsr1934@gmail.com if you are interested in any of those listed below, pictures are available.

1 New MILLER \$ 25.00

1 New THE LAST GREAT MILLER \$ 50.00

1 New THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE AMERICAN RACING CAR \$ 25.00

1 New MILLER DYNASTY (first issue with supplement notes) \$ 350.00

2 New MILLER DYNASTY (sealed 2nd issue) \$ 200.00 each.

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The Milwaukee Mile hosted the Hy-Vee Milwaukee Mile 250 doubleheader event on August 30-31, 2024 and we look forward to welcoming them back in 2025! Seen here is Pietro Fittipaldi, racing for the Rahal Letterman Lanigan team at the Milwaukee Mile race this past summer.



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About The Harry A. Miller Club



Harry 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, 2025.

