

Vintage Views

*The Official Newsletter of the
Garden State Vintage Stock Car Club*

VOL II NO 10

AUGUST 1993

1953 OLD BRIDGE INAGURAL RACE



AUGUST 21, 1953, Ray Brown, winner of the first feature at Old Bridge in Carl Gardella's #102, with starter Tex Enright.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, August 18, 1993. West Long Branch Firehouse, Rt. 71 (Monmouth Rd.) and Cedar Ave., West Long Branch, N.J. 7:30pm. For directions call 908-223-9388. Don't forget, the September meeting is at IROC, look for directions in the September Newsletter.

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF STOCK CAR RACING HISTORY

MINUTES OF JULY 21, 1993 MEETING

The turnout for the July meeting was a theater managers dream. There was standing room only, so come early for the August meeting. Our total membership is 285. Who would have thought we would get so big in just 2 short years.

Ray Shea thanked the car owners and club members for the East Windsor show effort. Our show at Bridgeport will be in combination with the ACOT Club. It will be on Sunday afternoon Sept. 26th at 1PM. The management of Bridgeport has assured us that their show will give our club first class treatment. Please make every effort to be at Bridgeport and show your club colors.

Bill and Barbara Chevalier sent the club a nice thank you letter for the article about Bill in our newsletter. Special thanks was given to our gifted writer Michael Shea. Two belated awards were given to Walt Ritchie and to the family of the late Bob Russo. Due to the efforts put forth by these two, and many others, the club continues to grow.

By the end of the evening the TV/VCR fund was over \$400.00, thanks to everyone for your support.

The art work of two talented gentlemen was shown to the club. Those two being Joel Naprstek and Charlie Lindmar. They both do excellent work depicting racing's golden past.

Dale Snyder donated two copies of his video, Dirt Track Memories. One will be auctioned off at the September IROC meeting, the other will be kept in the club archives.

REMEMBER BRIDGEPORT SUNDAY SEPT. 26th. HALF PRICE ADMISSION TO CLUB MEMBERS WITH GSVSCC CARD. DON'T MISS THIS ONE!

ATTENTION CAR OWNERS!!

Anyone planning on bringing their car to Bridgeport Speedway on Sunday, Sept. 26, Please call Ray Shea **ASAP**, 908-840-6307.



Don Stumpf in the famous Racz #41 with the 406 Ford.

....VINTAGE VIEWS...

The official publication of the G.S.V.S.C.C. Evalina Erbe, Editor, Send info to: P.O. Box 228, Allenwood, N.J. 08720 or call 908-223-9388.

"MEMORIES IN MOTION"



by Michael Shea

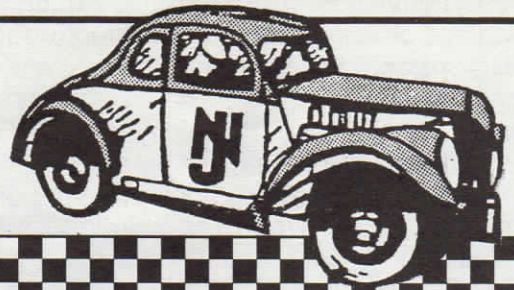
By being participants in racing we fulfill our need to be part of something larger than ourselves. At the same time being involved gives us the recognition and excitement of being part of a sport we can truly enjoy putting our hearts into. Many people who get involved will pass through the history of our sport, most will only remember the past champions and the cars that made them famous. Many drivers can take credit for the technology that was engineered to make these cars famous. But there are those who had no aspiration to drive these fast machines, yet had the desire to come up with the mind and money to let someone else take the glory. Yes we are speaking about the infamous car owner. There have been many over the years but one stands out in the running at the top of such a thankless position, that man is named Joe Racz.

Joe's interest in cars led him to develop a career as a machinist and engine builder. The challenge that would bestow this individual fueled the fire that would lead to success that most car owners would envy. The year was 1949, good friend Frankie Delroy would question Joe's ability to develop a racing engine without such specific knowledge. As far as Joe was concerned he had what it took to not only build a competitive racing engine but a car as well.

While many of you watched the Racz Garage #41 attack the speedways some of you may have wondered, was there any significance to the number of the car? The number that was chosen was due to a friends request that he team up with his #40, in return Joe would receive a body for his car. Few might remember the #40 but many of you know what happened to the legendary #41. At the 32 tracks they raced at they took at least one feature at 13. They also captured one or more track championships at six of them.

Many drivers wanted to pilot Joe's cars but his self proclaimed talent as a real selective star seeker limited them to very few great drivers. Soon after sprint car driver Bill Smith drove Joe's first car, it was then that the discovery of one of NJ's finest drivers was found. It was at the advice of Lew Volk that put Don Stumpf in the #41 seat for the first time. Don's early natural talent caught the eye of legendary racer Pappy Hough who told Lew, this is the kid to watch. The ability that marked Don's career was his versatility as a driver to run big, small, dirt or asphalt tracks. As Joe and Don constantly traveled throughout the East, the #41

Checkered Past



RAY BROWN WINS FIRST RACE EVER AT OLD BRIDGE

By EARL KRAUSE

It was some forty years this month, on Friday night, August 21, 1953, that the brand new, half-mile paved Old Bridge Stadium opened its gates for the first time for stock car racing. The track was located in a then very rural and wooded section of the central New Jersey township of Old Bridge on what was known at that time as Route 18. Later, when the current Route 18 was built, the road that fronted the stadium became Route 516.

Old Bridge ran until 1968, not only with modified, sportsman, and novice stock cars -- but with midget, sprint car, sports car, and NASCAR Grand National racing as well. Along with the outer half-mile track was an inner fifth-mile paved oval which utilized part of the big track's homestretch. TQ-Midget races were held on the small track around 1959, and in 1962 there was a highly-successful series of jalopy races on the fifth-mile oval.

But all of that was in the future on that August night in 1953. Of interest is that the stock car races at Old Bridge that first year were sanctioned by ARDC, better known for the midgets but then having a stock car division as well. The track was to have opened the week before, but rain forced a postponement. On August 21, all was in readiness, with the already-colorful Indian starter Tex Enright ready to wave the flags. Tom Galan, who was a noted announcer in New England at tracks like Riverside Park, called the action at the inaugural.

A standing room only crowd was in attendance, and reportedly many enthusiasts were actually turned away due to the lack of room. There was also a huge field of competitors -- and many of them had trouble getting to the track because the highway was jammed with spectator cars trying to get there as well! I recall GSVSCC member Don Stives telling me a few

years ago that he raced at Old Bridge that night. Don was just starting his career in the stock cars then. He remembered sitting in traffic with his stock car hooked behind -- and thinking that by the time he got to the track, the races would already be started! Don got to the track in time to race -- but later in the night became the first driver to flip his car! It happened on the backstretch, and Don almost hit the portable generator truck -- being used to operate the track lights -- as he flipped into the infield.

Ray Brown had the honor of winning the very first race, a 10-lap heat. Otha Johnson, who resided in the New Egypt area, won the second heat, and Joe Lawler took the third race. Joe Luzi annexed the 22-car consolation. Brown then went on to win the 25-lap feature over Bill Brown and George Romer. Reportedly, Ray was driving Carl Gardella's No. 102 -- the team for which another Brown, Lenny, also scored many wins with during the 1950s. Perhaps a GSVSCC member can verify that the 102 was indeed the car that Ray used to win on that historic first night. Ray, who lived in White Plains, NY, became Old Bridge's first star, as he went on to win five more features during that short 1953 season. He went on to a fine career in the ARDC midgets in the years that followed, and passed away from natural causes some years ago.

Today, a housing development with the ironic name of "Whispering Pines" is on the site of Old Bridge Stadium -- a track which played such a major role in the history of stock car racing in the northeast.



Joe Kelly in the XL-1 and Tommy Elliott in the #41 battle it out at Old Bridge Speedway in 1960.

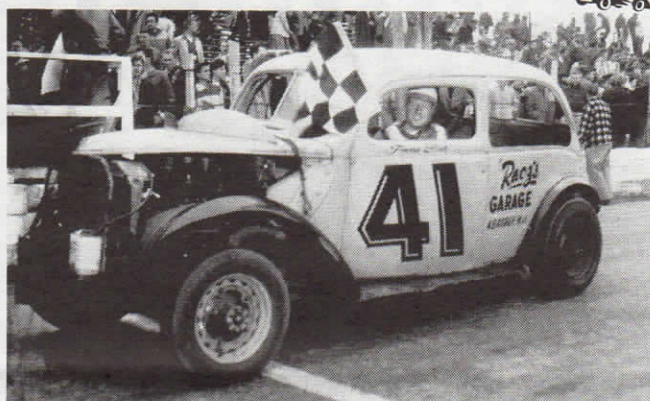
became synonymous with winning, capturing win after win and championship after championship. As the years passed by and Don had moved on to another car, the two drivers that carried on the winning tradition were Pete Frazee and Tommy Elliot. Unfortunately with the passing of Tommy many stories have been lost, hopefully with the help of family and friends we will be able to recreate the parts of his life that we would enjoy reading about. As far as Pete is concerned we look forward in the future in hearing about all the great times racing has brought to his life, especially how he whipped em on many occasions.

Joe's cars have enjoyed much success, but the race that is remembered so fondly is the year 1962. It was there after a seven year layoff that Stumpy returned to the Orange County Fairgrounds to show his talents in a spectacular way. At the time Joe and Don were running the Vineland, Wall and Old Bridge circuit. At Vineland, Stumpy had come into the pits after running the warmups and it was evident that the 406 Ford was loading up before the car would snap his head back. Don suggested that they run Middletown since the car ran so fast once it got going. Only problem was Joe had no dirt tires and the ones Stumpy had were three years behind on compound. So there they were at Middletown instead of Wall, dirt instead of asphalt, and last Joe's first big block instead of a small block. Surprisingly enough to all who read the headlines the following days, it was Stumpy and Joe who not only blew their doors off at Middletown and Nazareth but set five track records at both that weekend.

Through the years Joe's connection with Florida has led to friendships that always will be cherished. It was through Tommy Elliott's invitation south that led to learning a few tricks to the trade of running fast. On one particular trip they went to seek out Tommy's old racing buddies. As it turned out they were headed for the Allison family junkyard outside the Miami Airport. As Joe met with the Allison brothers and Red Farmer it was evident to these men that Joe could really tell a great racing story. Before Joe finally left Florida, he explained to Bobby that racing for \$75.00 down South was not equal to running up North for \$300.00 or \$400.00. As Bobby's eyes opened wide, Joe invited him North if he ever decided to make the trip. To Joe's surprise within a few months one afternoon an old pickup truck, trailer and carrying a car #312 showed up at his garage. It was then that Joe developed a special friendship with Bobby and Judy Allison. When the races that week were rained out due to a real bad storm and things looked grim for the Allison's it was Joe's compassion for them that he stepped in to give them a hand that kept Bobby racing North for a little while longer.

When we look back at the racing career of Joe Racz, on thing can be said above all else the man gave so much to stock car racing and its people. In

remembering that special connection with the Allison's, I can't help thinking about the tremendous loss Bobby and Judy have had to endure. We will certainly miss there two sons, only through the Lords love will they be able to go on. Joe we sure miss you're cars, hopefully the recreation of that #41 will put a smile on your face and remember when you and your cars were the king of the mountain.



Tommy Elliott wins one of many at Old Bridge in the Racz #41, late 1950's.

OLD IRON TRADER



WANTED: low priced, used stock car trailer
Dick Schoonmaker, 914-496-6333.

GRANDSTAN GAB

Collected by Eleanor Hagerman, please call her by the 25th of the month with news, 908-222-4408.

Congratulations to Lynn Elliott, daughter of Tommy Elliott, one of Wall Stadium's all time feature winners on her recent marriage, July 4, 1993.

Belated Happy Birthday wishes to our President, Ray Shea. Wonder what kind of surprise presents he received??

Glad Dick Disbrow is out of the hospital and recovering nicely from his third knee surgery.

Our sympathy to Dan and Gail Rhein on the death of his father.

Club Bus Trip on Sat. Oct. 2 to World of Outlaws race at Williams Grove will leave at 11am from "Holiday Travel", 445 Shrewsbury Ave., Shrewsbury, N.J. - Directions to follow in the September Newsletter or call Bill Erbe, 908-223-9388.

OOPS ! DIRECTORY CHANGE. Please note that the phone number for Rhein, Danny & Gail in the Membership Directroy is wrong, the correct number is 7183, not 7184. Sorry!