

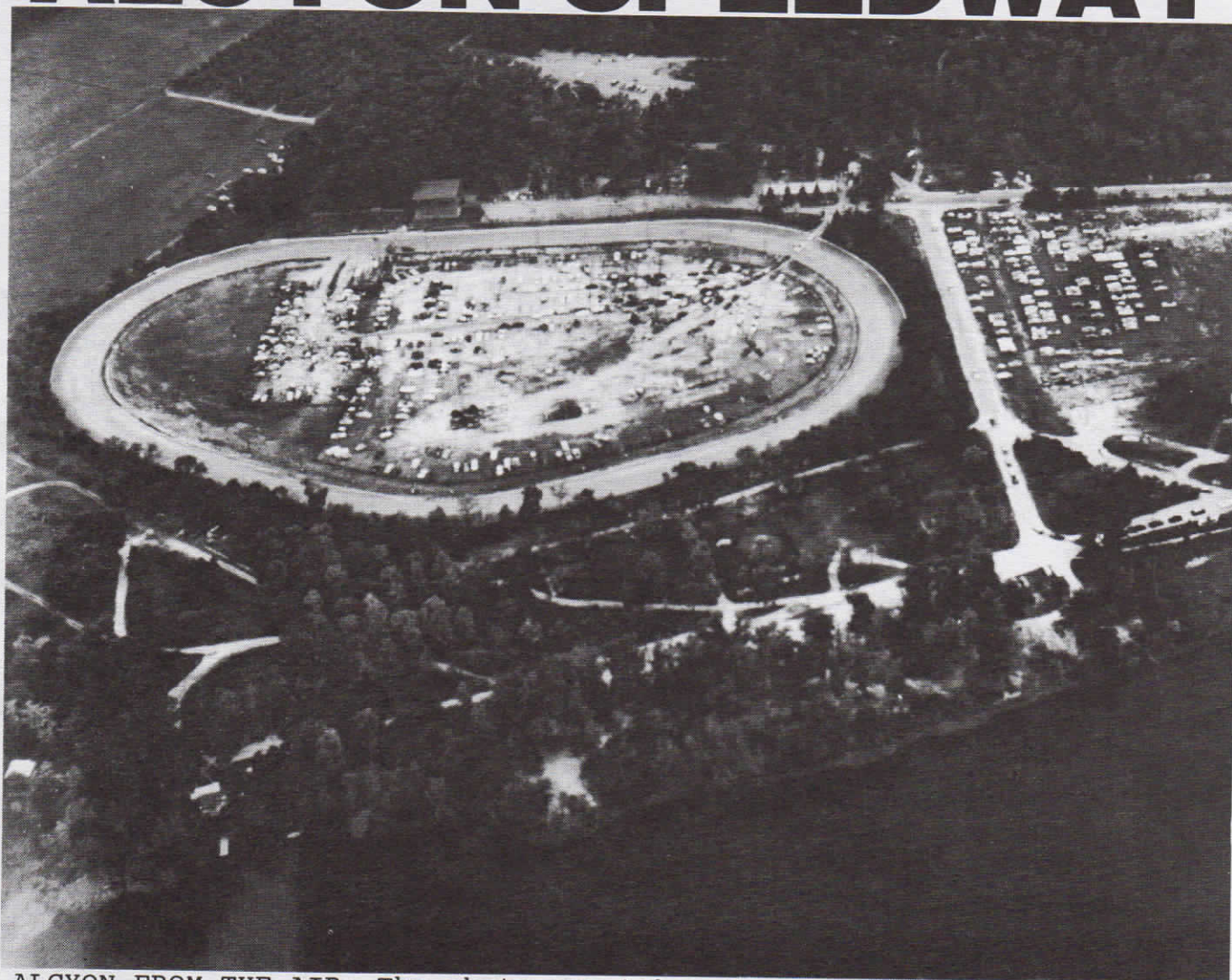
Vintage Views

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

SEPTEMBER 1994

VOL 3 NO 11

ALCYON SPEEDWAY



ALCYON FROM THE AIR: The photo was taken from over the lake. The amusement park was located between the lake and the dog-leg. The photo clearly shows the famous 5 turns. (Walter Chernokal photo)

September Meeting, Wednesday, September 21, 1994, 7:30pm, West Long Branch Firehouse, Rt.71 (Monmouth Rd.) and Cedar Ave., West Long Branch, NJ, for info call 908-223-9388 or 908-840-6307.

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF STOCK CAR RACING HISTORY



MINUTES OF AUGUST 17, 1994 MEETING

On August 21, 1991, 48 people gathered at an "unofficial" meeting in Bill Erbe's back yard. Now as we celebrate our 3rd Anniversary the club boasts over 300 members. We have come a long way in just over 1,000 days.

Bob Thomas has invited the club back to IROC for our 3rd visit. You must show your club membership card for admittance. Only members and associate members are permitted to keep the crowd at a reasonable number.

The fire trucks were moved out and in their place was the TRIX Racing (Ted's Radical Inventions and X-periments) #79 Chevrolet Lumina, and the last Dodge race car of Richard Petty brought down by it's new owner, club member Sonny Abagnale.

Ted Walter's owner of the #79 brought along a video of the team done by the Fox Network out at the recent "Brickyard 400" at Indianapolis, where the car was attempting to qualify.

Old Iron Trader



FOR SALE:

Car show rope-off stanchions, stainless steel or brass with ropes (Theatre style), \$25 each, Doc Morrow, 908-251-1077

Featherlite trailers and auto springs, discount to card carrying club members, Perth Amboy Spring Works and Statewide Trailer Sales, 185 Sheredon St., PerthAmboy, NJ, See Joe, 908-442-4424.

2 firestone dirt track tires, 14.0x31.0x15, grooved rear R154, \$100 for pair, Phil Erbe, 908-775-3168.

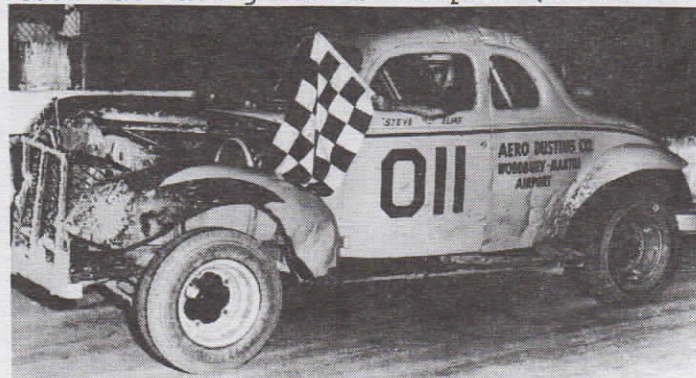
'52 Merc motorw/ '36 Ford trans, \$500, '51 Ford F1 pickup, 6 cyl flathead, \$3,500, Bob Koenig, 908-283-2499.



by Michael Shea

The heros of south Jersey stock car racing have long been admired as some of the best in the business. The tracks that housed these competitors week to week put on some of the most exciting stock car races that N.J. has ever seen. Although names like Hildreth, Tasnady, Olsen, and McLaughlin became household names throughout all of N.J, many south Jersey drivers competed just locally to where they lived establishing themselves as the steady week to week competitors of the south. One such competitor whose greatest compliment came from Tasnady when he said, "the only difference between you and I is equipment" can hold his head high as this month we pan the camera back in time to view the racing career of south Jersey star Steve Elias.

After visiting YellowJacket speedway in '49, Steve and a friend set their sights on fielding a car before seasons end. When their car came to the strickly stock they soon realized what was expected from them against a most competitive field of cars. After a brief flirt with being an owner-driver Steve was awakened to the fact that owning a car was not for him. Through the early years rides were plenty, but finding the right car meant the difference between winning and losing. It was on to tracks like Pearsons Corner, Atco, and Pleasantville where Steve was met with stiff competition from the likes of Lew Mood, Rocky DiNatale, Chick DiNatale, Paul Barbiche and Johnny Karp. When '52 came to an end and 12 wins to his credit was named most improved driver and Eastern Stock Car Racing Assoc. champion.(which was



Steve Elias in Graham Denham's #011. Steve earned the 1953 Modified title at Alcyon Spedway in this ride.

2 (Walter Chernokal photo)

a combo in pts between Alcyon and Pleasantville) 1953 Steve was back in style once again as he captured the Alcyon Speedway Modified championship.

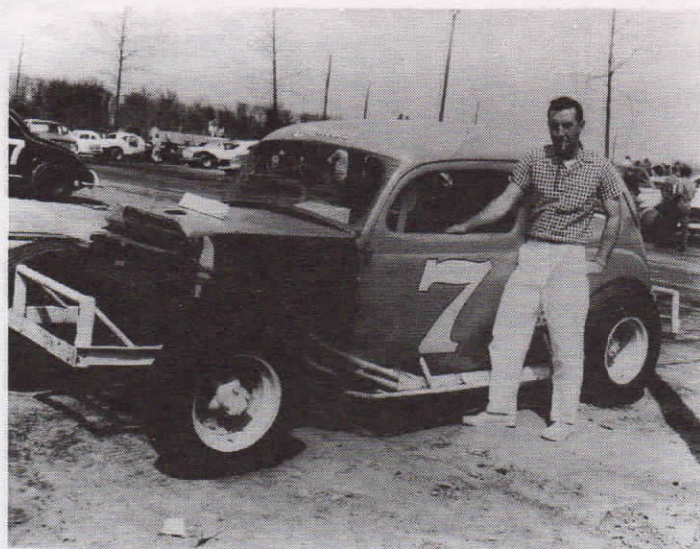
Most noted driving opportunity came later in Steve's career but would not be the first experience in this most famous race car. When Romeo Gelsi out of Newfield showed up at the track one particular afternoon with a #44 sedan, little did Steve know after running it in the heat that this car would go on to have success like few cars. When a choice to drive this #44 or a #160 from the other side of Millville in the feature had to be made, Steve chose the #160 and took the win that day. After that day Tasnady befriended Gelsi and won many races. When Neil Williams bought the #44 and Tas' decided to move on to another car, a new car was built for Ralph Smith. The #44 "old rags" sedan was set aside but not for long as Steve brought the sedan out of the weeds so to speak and ran it as a sportsman. The first outing at the newly paved Vineland Speedway opened some eyes as Steve broke Elton Hildreth's track record in the feature on back to back weeks.



Steve Elias receives the trophy for his feature win, May 9, 1958. This was the second week Vineland ran after being paved. (Russ Dodge collection).

From this point forward Steve campaigned as a sportsman driver having much success at south Jersey tracks. The early 60's saw Steve running strong with the modifieds capturing the 61-63 Sportsman championship. Ask him why he drove sportsman and he'll say that there weren't that many good running modifieds. Steve finished his career after 18 yrs of racing in 1968.

Champions are not born they are made. The guts and determination within one's self lays the groundwork to build upon. Steve's character as a winner is well established. Unfortunately some of the greatest drivers never get the greatest breaks. Many drivers



Steve Elias with Herb Vail's "Cherokee Special" at East Windsor. Note Steve's everpresent trademark, the cigar he always had when he drove (Ace Lane photo).

sacrificed traveling to the bigger \$ shows to stay closer to their families. Although many did not claim fame on a wide scale the local champion no matter where he runs can always be looked upon as the hero. Steve in our eyes you are a hero. Thanks for the memories.

To all our Friends in the G.S.V.S.C.C.

The families of the late David B. Innes Jr., would like to give special thanks to all members of the club for your overwhelming support in our time of loss and deep sorrow.

Thank you for your bereavement cards, telephone calls, Mass cards, flowers, gifts, fruit baskets, plants and donations, but most of all thank you for being such caring friends.

Dave loved his club and all of his friends so lets try to remember his smiling face, rosey cheeks, his wittiness, and his warm and compassionate ways.

Let us look upon his death as an enlightenment of how many special people cross our paths and how it enhances life itself.

Love
Gloria Innes
and Family

Checkered Past



REMEMBERING ALCYON SPEEDWAY by Russ Dodge

An enthusiastic crowd cheered as starter, Harry Reeves, gave NASCAR Modified Champion, Johnny Roberts, the checkered flag to end a crash filled 50 lap Labor Day feature. The date was September 5, 1960. The talk was about how Johnny had lapped the entire field, with the exception of runner-up Budd Olsen. The McLaughlin, Tasnady, Cagle, and Lindsay fans were busy justifying their heroes' losing efforts, reliving the glories of the past summer, and expressing anticipation of the victories to come in the next season, only seven months away.

Little did these "loyalists" know that day, Alcyon Speedway, located on Holly Avenue in Pitman, NJ, would never echo the sounds of stock car racing again. As a result of a land sale by "Promoter" Bill Nocco, with a sales clause prohibiting racing from ever returning, the hot bed of Modified Sportsman racing in the Northeast was put to sleep.

It has only been a few months ago, at the time of this writing, that the large concrete base structure of the main grandstand was finally removed. The concrete base had served as a shrine over the past thirty-four years for returning fans as they would make their "pilgrimages" to the site in search of the joys of the past.

The track at Alcyon Park was constructed as a 1/3 mile bicycle facility in 1895. Alcyon was the name of a lake and small amusement park located on the same acreage. The park featured a boardwalk on the lake, arcades and rides such as a merry-go-round, roller coaster, and bumping cars.

In 1910, the track was expanded to 1/2 mile in length to allow horses to race on the track. To gain this additional distance, the back straight-away was "bulged out" to form a D-shape giving the new speedway its famed dog-leg and five turns. To pin point when the track was first used for motorized racing is impossible. Documentation of motorcycle racing in 1914 and auto match racing in 1916 does exist. Pictures from 1929 showing "unsanctioned" auto racing between roadsters "right off the road", also exist.

The start of auto racing at Alcyon Speedway is usually dated at 1935 when Pitman garage owner, Bill Vail, started to promote races at the track. His tenure would last until two years prior to the track closing. The last two years of operation were conducted by Vineland Speedway promoter, Bill Nocco. "Big car" racing, featuring the names of the day, would be sanctioned by AAA (the forerunner of USAC) until the late forties. Following WWII, racing resumed at Alcyon, usually with big cars. It was in this post-war era that the stock car emerged and stock car racing began. The stock cars would become the primary type

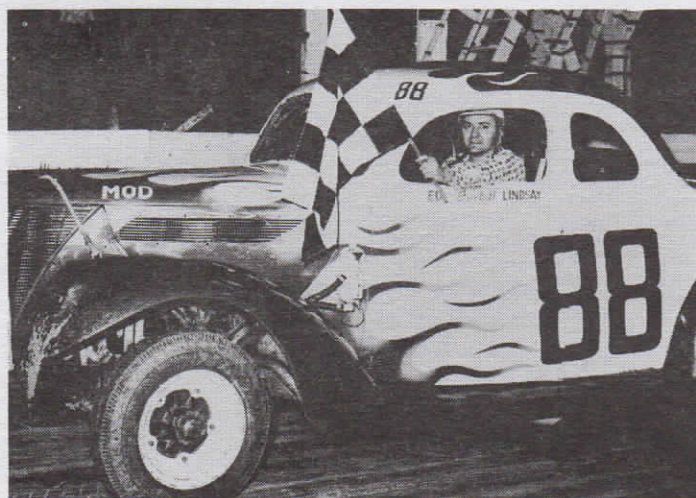


Sal Moschella wins with Tom Skinner's 659 at Alcyon on May 23, 1958. The throttle stuck and Sal drove by turning the key off and on in the 4 turns. (Bob Sweeten photo).

of racing at the speedway with combination and special shows sponsored by clubs such as AMA, NARA, and URC.

The advent of the stock car nurtured a fine field of drivers from the South Jersey area. Budd Olsen, who was recognized as a skilled open-wheel driver would make the switch by the mid-fifties and go on to earn the title of NASCAR Modified Champion of 1958. Budd's brother-in-law, Jackie McLaughlin, focused more on the stock car but proved to be equally skilled in a sprint car. Steve Elias 1953 Modified Champ at Alcyon, developed his skills at Pitman and continued to be a top contender for more than a decade after the track closed. Other local drivers of considerable achievement were: Lew "the Flying Farmer" Mood, "Bob" Phil Geemenden, Georgie Moore, Marty Geortler and Jackie Hamilton, just to name a few.

While Alcyon drew drivers on a regular basis from all over the Northeast; drivers such as Pete Corey and Kenny Shoemaker from NY; Freddie Fehr and Otto Harwi from Easton, Pa. the strongest and most consistent delegation was from Maryland. This "hard charging" group lists Pee Wee Poblets, Ralph Smith, Ken Mariott ('57 NASCAR Mod. Champ), Glenn Guthrie ('59 NASCAR Champ), Reds Kagle, Ed Lindsay, and Johnny Roberts ('60-'61 NASCAR Modified Champ) in its membership. The "Maryland Boys" usually came in meticulously prepared and maintained cars, capturing many checkered flags at the oval.



Maryland's Ed Lindsay after a feature win at Alcyon, April 25, 1958. (Bob Sweeten photo).

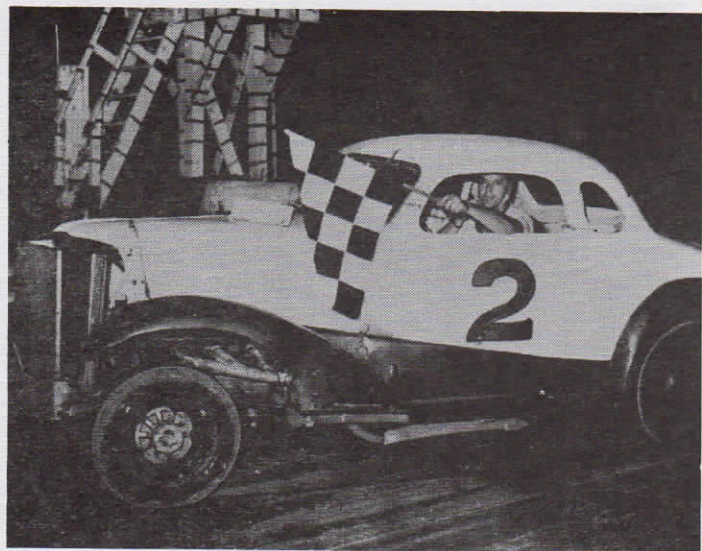
Alcyon should be recognized for several aspects of its promotional strategies for which it was a forerunner. A program book was produced on a weekly basis which contained at least six, 5"x7" photos, usually from the previous week's racing action. The center fold provided space for a finely written story reviewing action at the speedway, driver interviews, point standings and future race program information. Track photographers, Walter Chernokal (until 1957) and Bob Sweeten contributed the pictures while public relations man, Bud Emery, penned the stories under the alias of "Five Turnz". A second aspect was the practice of using two announcers. Bob MacFarland and, later, Bob McGinley, were the race announcers while Bridgeton, NJ, radio personality, Paul Hunsberger, served as commercial announcer. This two-announcer format was later used at other tracks.

The third practice was that of scheduling special event nights. On such occasions guests were present and waved the flags or presented trophies. Philadelphia Eagles Night was regularly scheduled with the top Eagles players attending. CBS Sports person, Jack Whitaker, was there for a mid-fifties show. These are just two examples of the special events held at the track.

Writing the story of Alcyon, capturing its true perspective on racing, would be voluminous.

Whether it was the post-race gathering in the kitchen of Helen and Bill Vail, consisting of drivers, owners, and personnel; or just the lure of tough competition, the best kept coming back. For the fans the atmosphere created at Alcyon would be hard to replicate. From the time the Pitman Firemen were paid for parking in their lot or the dollar admission was paid to enter the infield or grandstand, the excitement would grow. - The smell of driver Bill Lewis' popcorn concession close to the pits; - The chase to see who was already signed-in at the

pits; - The waiting anxiously for the late arrivals; - Trying to catch a glimpse of your favorite driver in the pit or, perhaps, even a chance to talk through the pit fence; - Waiting with anticipation for the vendor selling the latest program followed by the search through Illustrated Speedway News or N.S.S.N. for stories or pictures to validate their accuracy; - The jubilation or disappointment of the feature event; - The reliving of the races with friends; - The long wait until next time --- the next time which would never come after that Labor Day show.



Al Tasnady after one of his 9 wins in 1958 at Alcyon speedway. The blue and white deuce was owned by Lucky Jordan. (Bob Sweeten photo).

Some other guys you may recognize who raced at Alcyon:

Frankie Schnieder, Sal Mochella, Freddie Adam, Carl Van Horn, Don Stumpf, Bob Rossell, Bob Malzahn, Toby Tobias, Blackie Reider, Pete Frazee, Runt Harris, Ralph Moody, Mike Magill, Chick DiNatale, Barney Oldfield....

All of who demonstrated the diversity of competitors at the Alcyon Speedway.

PICNIC-PICNIC-PICNIC
SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 25th
12-6pm
SHARK RIVER PARK
YOU MUST PRE-REGISTER

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.

IMPORTANT CLUB NEWS...

The October meeting will be held at the IROC Shop. It will be for CLUB MEMBERS ONLY, Directions will be enclosed in the October newsletter

Remember, the club picnic is Sunday, September 25. You must register by Wednesday, September 21, meeting night. call Bob Worth, 908-938-5004 or Ray Shea, 908-840-6307.

Enclosed in this newsletter is the form for Officer Nominations for 1995 and the Founders Award. Please take the time to fill it out and either bring it to the September or October meeting or send mail to the address on the form.

GRANDSTAND GAB...



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

Congratulations to President Ray Shea for not only winning his heat race, but also the feature race for Vintage cars at Flemington on August 27, 1994. Ray has now won races in the '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s. Speedracer Ray!

Inside Winston Cup Racing, as shown on TNN, recently did a segment on club member Ray Evernham and his family, featuring his son Ray J. Ray J. is three years old and suffering from leukemia. Ray admits that he is not handling the situation very well, but one would never know it. He decided to "go public" with his son's illness to make people aware that there are many sick children suffering from leukemia. Given all, Ray has come a long way with a winning Winston Cup team, a great driver, and a little boy who's illness is in remission.

Ann McMann is recovering from a series of health problems. Hopefully she will be reading this newsletter at home and not in the hospital!