



Vintage Views

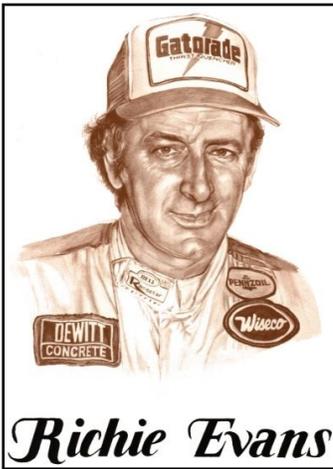
The official publication of the
Garden State Vintage Stock Car Club

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October, November, December 2020

Richie Evans Was A Fan Favorite In NJ

by Earl Krause - Area Auto Racing News, Edition of October 20, 2020

It's now some 35 years that "the music died" in the Northeast pavement Modifieds, and in the region's short track racing, be it asphalt or dirt. On October 24, 1985, NASCAR Modified driving legend Richie Evans lost his life in a crash at the wheel of his equally-storied orange # 61, at age 44. It was in turn three at Virginia's Martinsville Speedway, during what should have been just a routine, morning practice session prior to that weekend's then-traditional autumn classic race for the open-wheel pavement Modified racers.



Richie Evans

In over three decades since his passing, Richie has never been forgotten by his legions of fans and fellow competitors. Indeed, when Evans and his fun-loving team, led by crew chief Billy Nacewicz, pulled into the pit area with their orange box truck pulling the #61 on its open trailer under the banner of long-time sponsor and friend Gene DeWitt and his family, B.R. Dewitt Inc., there was immediate excitement. Evans was there to win! It's been documented that while racing under the DeWitt sponsorship from 1973 through 1985, Richie Evans won an incredible 409 Modified features. Overall, he had some 475 total victories.

On that October, 1985 morning when Richie Evans died, he had already clinched a record ninth NASCAR National Modified championship...an incredible eighth consecutive. Not long before, he had won what turned out to be his final race, a non-NASCAR point event at Oswego, NY. A week



NOW it's a party (in Daytona Beach).

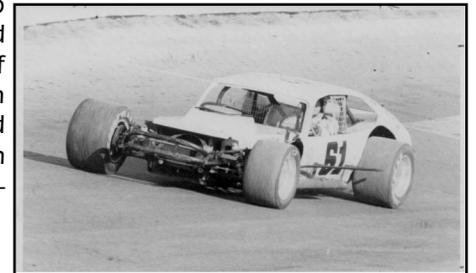
prior to his passing, he finished sixth in the Thompson World Series NASCAR Modified main, which officially gave him the 1985 National divisional title before he headed south to Martinsville Speedway.

BEST OF THE BEST: When Richie Evans was named to the "Class of 2012" for the NASCAR Hall of Fame, there was near universal happiness and a sense of, "yes, our hero is being honored". Those who had either cheered for Richie and the orange #61 or dueled with him in high-speed, wheel-to-wheel contests on tracks from Maine to Florida definitely approved. Evidence of Richie Evans' following are the *nine* "Most Popular Driver" awards as voted by the fans.

In 2000, a select panel of media members and influential persons in our sport participated in a significant project. Coordinated by Lenny Sammons and the staff of Area Auto Racing News, the panel met to determine the Top-25 Pavement Modified Drivers of the 20th Century. When they had concluded their voting, Richie Evans was named the Number One Modified Driver of that group by a wide margin.

"AT HOME" IN NEW JERSEY: Richie's residence and base of racing operations, a small garage on Calvert Street in Rome, New York earned him a catchy "Rapid Roman" nickname. Still, he became a crowd favorite at tracks north to south, and especially in New Jersey, where he was a major figure in the history of racing in the Garden State. In fact, in 2005, the New Jersey-based Garden State Vintage Stock Car Club (GSVSCC) inducted Evans into its Hall of Fame in recognition of his stature and accomplishments in the New Jersey Modifieds.

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GSVSCC meetings are held on the 3rd Wednesday from January through November, 7:30 p.m. at the West Long Branch Firehouse, Rt. 71 (Monmouth Road) and Cedar Ave. West Long Branch, NJ.
For directions call 732-330-8349 or go to www.gsvscc.org.

It was in my native New Jersey where I personally first saw Richie Evans compete, initially at Trenton Speedway in the early 1970s in the October Race of Champions. Evans won that event in 1973 at Trenton, then contested on the now-legendary "dogleg" mile and a half course. He went on to triumph in the Race of Champions at Pocono, Pennsylvania in 1979 (then on the 2-1/2 mile triangle) and in 1980 (on the inner 3/4-mile oval).

While Richie was not a weekly (or even once in a while) Saturday night racer at NJ's Wall Stadium, his name is on the list of Modified feature winners at that legendary high-banked paved oval. Evans triumphed in an All Star Stock Car Racing League feature at Wall on August 17, 1971. That night, with the top All Star racers against the Wall regulars, Richie bested fellow invader Gene Bergin (in the #2x Ford Pinto of Bob Judkins), Wall standout Jim Hoffman, League racer Rene "The Champ" Charland and NJ's Tommy Green. Richie was also a regular visitor to Wall Stadium's Thanksgiving weekend Turkey Derbies. Although not winning that event, he came close, with runnerup finishes in 1979 and '80.

I then watched Richie Evans compete and win many times in my role as announcer at NJ's then-paved quarter-mile New Egypt Speedway during its NASCAR Modified years.

NEW EGYPT STANDOUT: The last regular season for the full Modifieds on the New Egypt Speedway pavement, under the NASCAR banner, was in 1986. When that chapter closed, the track's book of statistics listed Richie Evans as having 23 victories in the Modifieds. That tied him with NJ driving great John Blewett, Jr., also a 2005 inductee into the GSVSCC Hall of Fame. Each scored all of their New Egypt wins between 1976 and 1985. Evans was the track division champion in 1979 and '82; Blewett was the titlist in 1980, '81, '84 and '85. In 1982, John, Jr. finished an impressive runner-up to Evans for the NASCAR National Modified crown.

Evans was a master at the art of long-distance racing. At New Egypt for example, he was a three-time winner of its prestigious "Tom Grbac Memorial" 200-lapper, and twice over the 100-lap distance. Evans also had three New Egypt wins in 150-lappers. The last two features he won there were at that distance.

On Sunday afternoon, May 5, 1985, as part of one of the greatest talent-filled fields of pavement Modifieds to ever appear at New Egypt, Richie won the "Spring Fling 150" with one of his signature, late-race moves. He trailed another NJ Modified standout - GSVSCC Hall of Famer Tony Siscone in Dick Barney's red #14 - from lap 112 to 141. Then, in the midst of lapped cars on the backstretch and in turn three, Evans made what turned out to be the winning pass on Siscone. Richie Evans had defeated the best! Siscone held on to finish second.

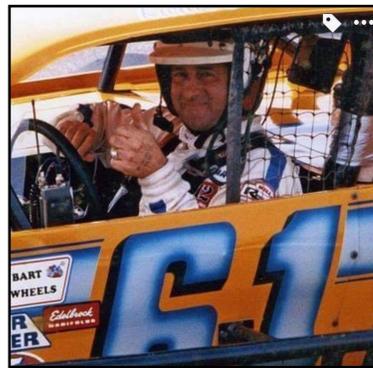
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Wall hosted a prestigious lineup. www.jalopyjournal.com photo



Richie Evans tribute at Wall Stadium's Turkey Derby. Drivers (top to bottom) were: Tony Siscone, John Blewett, Jr. and Gil Hearne.



The rest of the top-10 finishers were: NY's Mike McLaughlin and Doug Heveron; CT's Corky Cookman and Brian Ross; NJ's Jamie Tomaino; Charlie Jarzombek of Long Island; and Wall Stadium regulars Gil Hearne and Jerry Cranmer. Although no one could have imagined it at the time, what turned out to be the 23rd and final win for Richie Evans at New Egypt came on July 23, 1985. That 150-lap race was part of what was then known as the NASCAR Gatorade Modified Championship Series, the forerunner in concept of today's Whelen Modified Tour.

Richie had come into New Egypt for that event in typically red-hot summer form, with previous wins at Claremont, NH and CT's Stafford and Thompson Speedways. As he had done so often, Evans used a combination of savvy, patience and luck to win on that July night. With the six fastest drivers in time trials inverted for the feature, Evans started from second alongside of Gil Hearne, who was at the wheel of the Barney Truex Racing #59. With the green, Evans moved quickly into first place and held his lead through lap 105. But right behind was Jimmy Spencer from Berwick, PA, known as "Mr. Excitement", was challenging all the way. On the 106th circuit, Evans was forced to come off the throttle in lapped traffic and slipped out of his fast groove on the homestretch. That was all Spencer needed as he dove his signature metallic blue #24 to the inside of turn one to take the lead. It seemed Jimmy had Richie and the field covered, but Evans could never be counted out. Having relinquished the lead, he stayed right with Spencer and waited for an opportunity. That came with 10 to go, when the left rear tire on Spencer's car began going down and he had to slow his pace. Evans was in that familiar "right place at the right time" and retook first. He went on to take the win over George Kent, Heveron, Ross, Wayne Anderson, Cranmer, Blewett Jr., Spencer, Vinnie Green and Hearne. It was Richie Evans at his finest!

Three months later, the gifted, exciting racer Richie Evans took his last lap. He left a legacy of stories that continue to be told to this day in grandstands, race shops, and on the way to the track. As the songwriter Irving Berlin said, "The song is ended, but the melody lingers on."



Evans' regular ride in the pits of New Egypt Speedway. Two GSVSCC members' cars are in the shot as well. Photo - 3widespicturevault.com



Evans often raced NJ local racer Tom Green's #71 on Wednesday nights at New Egypt Speedway's Winston Modified Tour races. This photo is from 1980.



Race of Champions past winners shot, taken at Trenton Speedway in 1975. Photo courtesy 3widespicturevault.com



Evans chats with Busby Stevens between practices for the 1985 Cardinal 500 Martinsville Modified Tour race. Only Stevens would return to his pit after the race. www.edflemke.com photo

OCTOBER 21, 2020

The October meeting of the Garden State Vintage Stock Car Club was called to order at 7:34 p.m. Twenty members were in attendance.

President Ray Shea welcomed those in attendance. He said that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it's been 8 months since we gathered for a meeting. He thanked the members for coming out. As far as we know, we'll meet again in November, and then not until January, 2021.

Racing with Jesus Ministries Chaplain Bob Menschner gave the invocation.

On behalf of the club, Ray offered appreciation to the New Jersey racetrack promoters for making great efforts to open their tracks this season.

Ray informed the group of the passing of the following club members in recent months: Stan Van Brunt; Steve Senerchia; Bill Yoder; Anthony Ferraiuolo; Bill "Biff" Stevens; Don Patterson; Bill Hannah. Others who passed away were also mentioned: racing photographer J.J. Lane and dirt racer Ron Jon Koczon.

Get well wishes were offered to Pam Krause, wife of Club Historian Earl Krause; John Malsbury; Earl Megill; and Alice Ann McGann, who will be having surgery soon.

Ray announced that the club will have a new Treasurer. Mary Anne Hayes, our current Treasurer, took over the position after the passing of her husband, longtime member Paul Hayes. Mary Anne and her daughter Joanne and their staff did a great job taking care of our club's finances, and Ray thanked them for their service to the club. As they will be moving out of state soon, club member Alice Anne McGann has agreed to take over as Treasurer.

The club's 2020 awards banquet, originally scheduled for March, was postponed to October 25, 2020 due to COVID restrictions. Due to continuing restrictions, the banquet was again postponed to March 14, 2021. Hopefully, we will be able to get together then to honor the 2020 award honorees.

Ray announced Fleming's Pumpkin Run will not be held this November, so our club will not have an appearance at that event. We look forward to going to this event next year.

Ray informed the group that the club was able to run 50/50 raffles in the pits at Wall Stadium this year. Thanks to George Klein, Tim Day, and Bill Martens for working the raffles and helping to support the club.

Patterson's Fun Day was held on October 11th. Thanks to club car owners John Malsbury, Terry Van, Al Voorhees, and the Patterson family for bringing their cars to display. Thanks also to Jim Hall, who donated \$100 to the Wounded Warriors Project from his T-shirt sales.

Ray informed the group that club member Linda Cooper travelled to New Hampshire Motor Speedway for racing during the summer. Since she was already there, Ray asked her to visit the North East Motorsports Museum to inquire about items the club loaned the Museum when it opened several years ago. She was

able to bring back the helmets of Don Stumpf and Joe Kelly. The club also loaned five trophies. They will be recovered in the near future.

Ray has items that once belonged to racer Rick Sendzik. Ray brought them to the meeting for folks to check out.

The club's museum was established at Wall Stadium 18 years ago. This season it was noticed that it has some structural issues. Some of the blocks that the trailer was set on sank 7 inches into the ground. Thanks to Al Gerhum, Jim Hall, Don Bruno and Ray Shea, who worked to re-set the museum. It still needs to be permanently placed, which will be taken care of next year.

Ray said that 3widespicturevault.com website has photos to view from Bob Menschner. Club member Kevin Eyres has been posting photos that Bob took at Wall Stadium over the years when Bob worked as a track worker. Thanks to Kevin for posting the photos and to Bob for sharing them. Bob offered to bring his albums to a future meeting.

Ray Liss said that he and Larry Housman will again be working to put on the display at the Vintage Automobile Museum of NJ in Pt. Pleasant in January. They are in the process of putting this together. A discussion was held about what cars will be sought to display.

Jim Smith said that the Matheny School holiday event will be virtual this year. Ray mentioned that the club has sent a donation as we are always happy to do.

A motion was made at 8:15 p.m. by Jim Hall and seconded by George Klein to adjourn the meeting.



Finally! October's club meeting. Photo courtesy Ray Shea.

GET WELL WISHES

Earl Megill
Ray Shea



CONDOLENCES

on the passing of
Marty Van Druen's father-in-law



For over 30 years, a very special tradition has taken place: the annual Christmas Holiday Party for students at the Matheny School in Peapack, NJ. The Matheny School is a private school for children and young adults with disabilities. The party is held before Christmas at the school, with racers, media members and fans of our sport attending to meet the kids and give gifts.

As can be expected, the Matheny School has very strict COVID-19 policies to maintain, limiting outside visitors so as not to compromise the health of the students. With that in mind, the party will be held virtually on Saturday, December 19, 2020. The Matheny Christmas Party team will again present gifts to the students at the gathering - while not in person, at least "virtually through computer technology."

Details of the event are still being worked out by longtime organizer Kevin Eyres, his wife Nan, their daughter Allison, and many "friends that are like family" to make the event a success.

Tax-exempt donations to the party will be used to purchase gifts for the students. Donors will receive tax-exempt vouchers. Donations may be addressed to: RJC Charities, ATTN: Bob Caramella, 70 Albert Drive, Parlin, NJ 08859. Mr. Caramella works closely with Kevin Eyres and the holiday party staff. Donations may also be made through PayPal at the RJC Charities website: rjcharities.com/donate.

As with every other part of our racing and daily lives, it's the hope that a year from now, all will return to normal and the party will once again be held at the school. For 2020, thanks to the dedication of the "Matheny Racing Family", the students will still have their special day!



RACERS HELPING MILITARY VETERANS

The Patterson racing family presented their annual "Family Fun Day" at their Patterson Greenhouses in Freehold, NJ on October 11. The event, which included a race car and vintage/custom street car show; BBQ, bake sale and activities, raised over \$5,000 for the Freehold Disabled Military Veterans group and Warhorse Scuba which also works closely to help former military men and women.

A total of 130 cars were displayed. The purple and yellow #82 Gremlin stock car of Al Voorhees, Jr. and Butch Malsbury was judged by the fans as "Best of Show" in the Race Car division. Also on display were the M-3 Pinto of John Malsbury, Terry Van's #74 coupe, and the Patterson family's #33 Ford Pinto. The club's Hospitality Tent was in full swing as well.

Missing from the event was family patriarch and club member Don Patterson. Don, who loved his family's annual "Family Fun Day and Race Car Shows," passed away on September 1 at age 89.

Don's son Alan Patterson, Event Coordinator, was pleased with the event. "Awesome, we had a great turn out!", he said. "The fire company sold out of food and everyone enjoyed the vendors, band, and activities. It was so nice to see so many happy people!" *Thanks to Earl Krause for the writeup and Ray Shea for the photos.*



PHOTO TRIVIA ANSWER

from the Summer 2020 issue



...and he's outta there! What do you know about this spectacular wreck and how it relates to racing in NJ?

Well, the track isn't in New Jersey – it's in Alabama. The division doesn't race in New Jersey. But the car and driver...

James Horton III, from Folsom, NJ, is one of the state's favorite sons in dirt Modified racing. He was born July 3, 1956 in Trenton and grew up in Lebanon, NJ. He picked up the racing bug from his dad as a teenager and became an accomplished driver on the Sportsman circuit. George Smith of Statewide Racing saw his potential and added him to his team.

Horton won a Sportsman Championship in 1974 at NY's Orange County Fair Speedway. He moved up to the Modified division and won that title in 1976, again at Orange County Speedway. He had particularly good luck at Bridgeport Speedway in Swedesboro, NJ, capturing the Modified title there eight times between 1975 and 2003.

Horton enjoyed a variety of racing opportunities in the 1980s and 1990s. He was a regular on the ARCA circuit. He made his debut in NASCAR's Busch Series in 1985. Two years later, Horton got his first ride in a Winston Cup race. Between 1987 and 1998, Horton made 48 Sprint Cup starts, ranking among the Top 40 drivers in three seasons. He was especially good in superspeedway races—a far cry from his mastery of dirt tracks.

In 1993, Horton defied the odds by walking away from a horrible crash. During the DieHard 500 at Talladega Super Speedway (AL), he was clipped by Stanley Smith's car, hit three other cars, and went airborne, flipping over the retaining wall, rolling down a 30 foot embankment, taking out some chain link fence, and landing on an access road outside of the track. Amazingly, Horton walked away from the crash unharmed. When commenting on the wreck, Horton said, "You know you're in trouble when the first person to get to you after the crash is carrying a beer."

In 2002, Horton reached the 100-victory mark in dirt Modified racing. The Horton family continued its racing tradition when Horton's son, James IV, joined his father's Modified team.

Jimmy Horton continues to compete in Modified racing, showing the younger – *ahem* – newer racers the quick way around the track. His fan base is as strong as ever. Some fans have taken to honoring Horton with "memes" – photos with captions – on the internet. We leave you with a recent one that shows the result of the above trip out of the park:

PHOTO TRIVIA



You didn't get to the All Star League without having plenty of driving talent. This photo is packed with it. Can you guess the identities of these three drivers?

Look for the answer in our next issue, or go to our website www.gvscc.org if you can't wait that long. Sometimes the website answer contains more information than we have space for in print.

Reader photos are welcomed. Contact the Editor.



VINTAGE VIEWS, THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE GARDEN STATE VINTAGE STOCK CAR CLUB

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