



Vintage Views

**The official publication of the
Garden State Vintage Stock Car Club**

Dedicated to the Preservation of Stock Car Racing History
October, November, December 2021

LEN SAMMONS – IN HIS OWN WORDS

*by Candy Dolin, Area Auto Racing News 2021.
Reprinted with permission of AARN
Photos Courtesy AARN*

Lenny H. Sammons' contributions to northeast auto racing are enormous. While other regional race papers have perished, Sammons' Area Auto Racing News continues to thrive by providing the highest quality stories and photos.

The news Sammons publishes is gold for track operators, fans and competitors. The only way fans can follow the sport is with information about what's going on, and AARN is all about information. Sammons' paper plays a big role in keeping racing in our area healthy. Lenny's stories and columns are among the finest in the sport – well researched, intelligently written.

Add to that contribution Lenny's annual Motorsports trade show, where fans mingle with drivers and promoters get to tell their stories to potential ticket buyers. It's another incredibly important contribution to the region's auto racing.

The annual indoor races Lenny promotes with his two sons, Danny and Davey, bring fans and competitors together the only way possible during our cold bitter winters.

Nobody does more to support, encourage and grow auto racing in our region than Lenny H. Sammons. He has won the Henry P. Mclemore Award, which is voted on by award-winning journalists. Peer voting makes this the biggest motorsports journalism award. "As I see it, Len Sammons has no equal in today's auto racing world," said noted journalist and broadcaster Dr. Dick Berggren. When asked to write the forward for this interview, his reply spoke volumes about his regard for Sammons. "I'm honored to be asked," Dr. Berggren remarked.



On the scene, looking for the story.

The AARN readership may possibly find its own newly-found honor towards the newspaper and Sammons

family after they discover the primitive, humble beginnings of it all. From a telephone booth call to report local race results nearly 60 years ago by his father, Leonard J. Sammons Jr., to the generational empire that now exists, there is an exceptional tale to be told. The incredible genius, laser-like focus and fortitude to found AARN in 1963, Len Sammons, Jr. made decisions that are mindboggling and resonate through the family today. Len and his wife Maude's legacy of an outstanding work ethic still is practiced without exception. The Sammonses have earned every inch of success that now thrives under the AARN/family business umbrella. Lenny H. Sammons, who took over as AARN's President from his father over 40 years ago, explains an incredible journey his family has taken on the national stage.

DOLIN: First question: your mother and father - why on earth would they start a racing paper? What drove them to do something they had no real experience in doing? Did they have a real passion for racing?

Lenny H. Sammons (LHS): It was all on my father. He was a fanatic about things when he got involved with something. I was young at the time. He had taken a liking to going to the races. I don't know how he got started. We started going to the races in New Jersey on the dirt at Flemington on Saturday nights. Then we went to asphalt races on Sunday at Old Bridge, Thursday at Fort Dix (now New Egypt Speedway) and Vineland on Friday. Then East Windsor and Harmony opened up and we went there, started to venture away and went to PA for racing at Nazareth and Reading.



The photographer looks for a good subject.

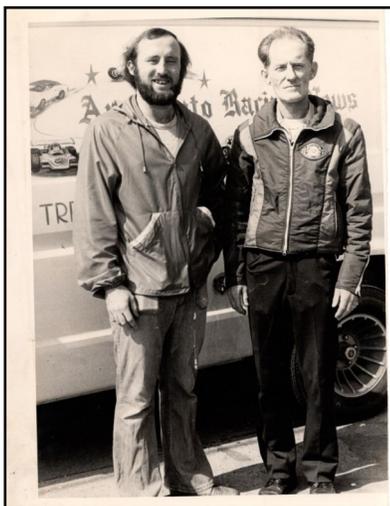


Lenny the young race fan at Flemington Speedway.

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.

DOLIN: How old were you when your parents started going to the races on a regular basis?

LHS: I was born in 1954, so I was six or seven. I don't remember how long he went before he got involved. He started calling in the race results from the track for the local Trenton paper. As soon as it was over, he would run to a pay phone and call it in. They would just put in a little blurb. He would tell them who won and give them a top five, and it would be in the Sunday paper.



Sammons, son and father.

My dad worked at Fairless Steel as an auditor. He worked different hours and a lot of shifts, but he always got off so he could go to the races. He wasn't a writer, but he really had a knack for putting things together and making things happen. He wanted to write for NJ-based National Speed Sport News. Dad contacted Chris Economaki [publisher of the newspaper], but Economaki wasn't interested. At the time, Chris wasn't covering much local racing.

So, Dad decided he would start his own racing paper. There were only National Speed Sport News and Illustrated Speedway News, published by Walter Bull off of Long Island, NY at the time. Of all times to do it, too! My father's health wasn't good. He had stomach ulcers at the time. After having surgery, he decided to start his own business (Area Auto Racing News, Inc.) because he couldn't work for a period of time.

The office was in our cellar, at first. Neither Dad nor Mom knew anything about putting a newspaper together and had never owned their own business. But they had a friend named Harold Rulon who lived in Trenton who was able to help them. Harold, who was the head scorer at many tracks, worked in newspaper publishing. They found a printer and a guy to help them sell advertising and the first paper was printed in 1963.

The first edition was only four pages. It was actually printed flat, and they had to fold it down in the basement. The second one had eight pages. They had to stuff the two sheets together before it was folded. It was pretty primitive. If I remember correctly, the printer sold honey on the side. I mean, it was a *really* small printing operation.

My mother was the bookkeeper for a tire company at the time, so she handled that for the company until she retired. She is now 92. It was a part-time gig in the beginning for them, so she worked her regular job by day and for AARN at night.

That went on for a couple years before they rented one of three offices together on Broad Street in Trenton. In time, Dad took two of the offices to have enough room. He ended up buying the entire building. Our office is still there.

The newspaper was so small at the start that he gave a scorecard with the paper. It came free with the paper and Dad was able to sell ads in it to local businesses near each track.

They had to pay someone to print the programs, so in time, Dad bought his own printing press. My father wanted to do everything himself if possible. Now he was in the printing business. He started doing programs and other people's printing. There were not many newspaper subscriptions at the time, so that money helped. He also got involved in the novelty business to keep the cash coming in and doors open.

DOLIN: Did your father live to see the paper's major successes?

LHS – My father passed away thirty years ago, in 1991, at the age of just 64. I'm now two years older than he was. He stepped back to allow me to run the paper, but not right away. He even started a local paper called the Area Reporter for a time to keep himself busy. I think he died proud of what Area Auto Racing News had become. We were running front page color photos at the time, something none of our competition was doing. Our coverage area had grown, and so did the page count (to 80+ a week during the summer).

Dad knew we were on our way. He got several people to help and teach me, including Pat Singer, who was very instrumental. I was supposed to go to college, but Dad got very sick during my senior year in high school. I ended up dropping my college courses and got on a work program. That allowed me to finish high school and work a half day as well.

Instead of college, I started working. I worked primarily in the printing business, which had really grown. Again, my father was a fanatic about doing things himself. He bought the company that was printing the paper at the time. That was a very educational deal; we printed papers for a lot of people, and I got to work with them and Pat Singer with Area to get them laid out and printed.



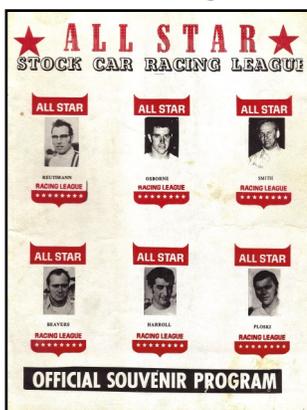
The Sammonses, Leonard, Maude, & Lenny

Dad went through a lot in the early days. There was a Tri-State Car Owner organization formed in the 1970's. They picketed the tracks and it got rough. I was really young at the time. I was taking photos, not writing, and Tri-State filed a lawsuit against AARN and my dad. They thought he was favoring the tracks' side of it. He stood up to that charge and directed AARN through it. The case was later dropped.

One of the other things I remember about him was how he tried to show me (without my knowing it) how to make money and run a business. When he started, he didn't have many subscribers, but sold a lot of papers at the tracks and at local stores. There wasn't much advertising either, so he got into the novelty business.

Like everything my father did, he went in with both feet. I'm not sure where he started having novelty stands, but we ended up weekly at East Windsor, Reading, Flemington, Penn National and Harmony. Then we worked the races held at PA's Allentown Fairgrounds, the first races at Pocono (before the big track was built) and the last couple of races at Langhorne. The big deal for us was the Trenton Fairgrounds, right in town. We did all the Indy car and NASCAR races for several years.

Dad had also gotten involved with Lou Figari and the All-Star Racing League. We printed the programs for them.



Figari hooked me up with my buddies to travel with them and sell the programs, t-shirts, patches and give-away free helmets to the kids. I got to go to all the All-Star races for two or three years. I ended up taking pictures for the program and Area Auto. My buddies were all 14 to 16 years old at the time, so my grandfather drove us around. It was a great time. I have a lot of great memories that will never be forgotten.

We would go Tuesdays and Wednesdays to All-Star races; go to Reading on Friday, Penn National on Saturday and Reading again on Sunday, and then start over. It was crazy. We did Trenton, Langhorne and Pocono big events with novelties, too. Before Trenton closed, I got the job with my buddies to sell the programs there and that was huge. We set up the novelty stands with Dad and Mom, sold the programs, and then helped break it all down afterwards, went home and unloaded.

Dad got me involved in the photo business too. We did thousands of them and sold photos off the novelty stands we had. Our cellar turned into a "sweat shop". Local friends that didn't travel with us would come and make buttons when we were away selling. We also made the

"Go Ploski Go" and drivers "for President" buttons one election year. Me and my buddies made a lot of cash back then (for a bunch of teenagers). Some were making as much, if not more, as their parents were [laughing]. It was my education in the business, really.

DOLIN: You have been an eyewitness to racing for decades. Has it ever affected you? The potential for danger?

LHS: Not to [a great] extent, but I've been at the races way too many times when a driver was fatally injured. When I was really young, I was with my father and mother when Jackie McLaughlin was killed at Nazareth Speedway. My father had become good friends with many drivers, including Jackie. I was nine at the time and a big Bob Pickell fan. Jackie flipped that night in August of 1964 on top of Pickell. Obviously, it was a bad scene. Dad took me with him to the hospital that night and we sat out in the parking lot. I remember hearing the news and how it affected my father a lot.

Since then, I have witnessed other fatal crashes that were shocking. Richie Evans was a friend. I was really glad I wasn't at Martinsville that day [that Evans suffered a fatal racing accident]. I had become really good friends with Mike Grbac. He was badly injured in a crash at Reading, at a race where I was taking pictures. I talked with him earlier in the day. When he wrecked on the front straightaway, I didn't know who it was in the crash. I walked to the crash and took pictures of the car lying upside down on the track and still didn't know it was Mike until I asked somebody. The car was so mangled. My God, I was in shock. He died a month or two later. That was a really hard one to swallow.

I never had the opportunity to race, but after I got married, me and my wife Debbie decided to get our two boys, Danny and Davey involved in Quarter Midgents. Later, we moved them up to big car racing. Danny raced on asphalt and Davey on dirt. They've both been injured in racing crashes, but luckily nothing ever life-threatening.

Danny broke his foot in a Modified at the New Hampshire mile. Davey, however, broke his back [racing Sprint cars] during the National Open at Selinsgrove Speedway. He was also involved in a few bad crashes that resulted in four compressed vertebrae. He made a family decision to switch to a dirt Modified two years ago and I admit to breathing easier when he races.

DOLIN: Many other racing trade papers no longer exist. Why has AARN continued to survive and even thrive? What are you doing that is so much different?

LHS: I don't know. That's really hard to answer. We were the first regional, and the largest, so we might have had stronger roots. My father also diversified – remember, we were in the printing, novelty, and promotional businesses. We later got into event promotions during the off-season. Area Auto also has a strong future with my two sons. Chris Economaki was an icon, but when he passed away, he left [his newspaper] to his daughter, who had not been there with him for many years. No offense to her - she tried her best, but it just didn't work out.



Sammons, sons and father:
Danny, Davey, and Lenny.



Getting the scoop from accomplished dirt racer Billy Pauch.

I was the youngest of 20-some publishers of racing papers when I took over. My father put me in charge and stepped back but was there if I fell. That really might have helped a lot.

When my father started, there were just the two national papers. Then Grand National Cup Scene arrived, changed to Winston Cup Scene, got big and went away. I think the local papers are now all gone as well across the country.

Racing has changed an awful lot, both on a local and national level, since Dad was alive. Look at pictures of racetracks in the '60s, '70s and 80s and see the amount of people in the grandstand. Today at many tracks, there are more people in the pit areas than grandstands. Short track racing has become more like Bracket drag racing (for competitors only) at many tracks. Then the internet came along, and instant news was available.

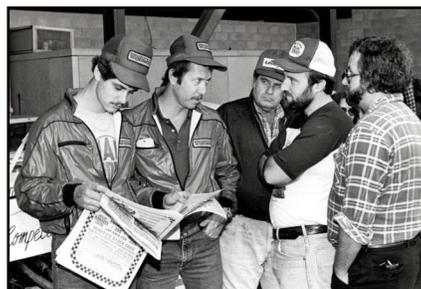
A lot of the other racing papers lived off the easy news of who won the race. We changed our focus to "more than who won" years ago. Our writers try to get the hard-hitting backstage news not available anywhere else. That is what I think has kept our readership there: great columnists and sidebar writers are a large part of our success. They get the hard-hitting news and the photographers get the one-of-a-kind shots.

A lot of websites are now becoming more and more video-oriented. They are so busy trying to beat the other one to get the news out first that more of our writers are left alone in the pit area afterwards to get the bottom line from the event newsmakers. They've almost become like the daily newspaper writer from the past, working on a strict deadline.

We've also got some unbelievably good veteran and young writers on our staff that know what questions to ask. It's amazing that we have six to eight columnists that have been writing for AARN for over thirty years! Awesome writers that are very well-respected. I was once the young kid. Now I am the "old guy", but I love working with young writers and seeing them grow.

I've had great people work for me in the office as well. I mentioned Pat Singer before; I learned a lot while Kevin Kovac, Jerry Reigle and Brett Deyo worked at AARN. The same can be said today about Earl Krause and Steve Barrick, who have been here for years. I love working this year with two young writers - Pete MacDonald and Jack O'Connor.

I really got my college education in writing and laying out a newspaper from Pat Singer. I was really glad when she was inducted in the DIRT Motorsports Hall of Fame and received the McLemore Award. Pat deserves to be in the NASCAR Hall of Fame. She was the first female in the press box at Indianapolis, Daytona, Talladega and many those tracks - the first female allowed in the pit area at many local tracks. She only worked for AARN for a few years before she moved on to a daily paper, but her insight was huge for me.



Sammons gets Gary Balough's side of things at Super Dirt Week, Syracuse.

DOLIN: In your opinion, what does AARN do that creates such a loyal readership? In this day and age, everything is digital. AARN is a good, old-fashioned print newspaper.

LHS: The one thing I hear clearly from our readers constantly is "don't give up print". You can read our newspaper now online on Tuesday morning at 6:00 a.m. It is "turn page technology" - it even sounds like a page turning when prompted. It's exactly the same as the paper you'll get in the mail, but you can't hold it in your hands. You can't take your laptop into the bathroom. Our readers still want that paper, and they keep them for years. It's not gone when the next story moves it along, like the internet. People still keep scrapbooks. We try to promote ourselves as much as we can to get to the new fans in the grandstands or racers in the pits. Unfortunately, there are a whole lot less fans in most cases.

Special events do really well. I think a lot of the promoters have just gotten to the point where they're more concerned with selling race tires, pit passes and racing fuel. Yeah, they need fans, but it's not the priority that it used to be or should be today. The more classes they run, the more they bring in at the back gate, but the show gets longer and longer. I talk to older fans often and they say don't go weekly anymore because the shows are too long for them.

DOLIN: What prompted the concept for your trade show?

LHS: I always thought there was a place for one but couldn't find a building with a great location to do what I wanted. Many years before, they held one in Atlantic City during an indoor race weekend, and it was kind of cool. Leon Altemose, a racer at Grandview, built the Valley Forge Convention Center in King of Prussia; I was able to get a January date the first year they opened in 1986.

My father and mother bankrolled the idea. As it turned out, we didn't need it - it was a home run. The first year, it was only on one floor of the convention center. By the time we ran out of room and had to leave, we used all three floors and put up a big tent in the parking lot.

Legendary Races, Places & Faces
Photos From The Lens Of Lemmy H. Sammons

AREA 14
Racing World

PICTORIAL
1970s & 1980s

Sammons' collection of racing photography, available at www.aarn.com

I thought Motorsports was a perfect name because the show was about the racers, the fans and the promoters. NASCAR was getting popular at the time, so we brought in national stars to attract casual fans who were watching on television; then we could get racing schedules from local speedways in their hands. Miller beer was my early sponsor. They brought in Bobby Hillin, Jr. the first year; Bobby Allison, Rusty Wallace and many others they sponsored appeared in the years that followed.

I was always a big fan of Miss Hurst Golden Shifter, Linda Vaughn, and having trophy queens in Victory Lane. That's how the Miss Motorsports competition came about. We've crowned a winner at every show until this year [2021], when the show was cancelled by COVID restrictions. We'll be having the show again this January [2022].

It all really worked out well beyond our expectations for over 30 years. That led me to promote my first indoor race in Philadelphia in 1989. We packed the place, but we couldn't get another date. It wasn't until 2003 that I got Atlantic City to allow me to bring back indoor auto racing. That grew to events in Providence, RI, Baltimore, MD, Trenton, NJ, Allentown, PA and Syracuse, NY. We were scheduled to do four indoor races this year [2021] and the Motorsports show, but the pandemic had other ideas.

DOLIN: Final question: what do you think the paper's finest accomplishment has been? Greatest contribution to local racing?

LHS: One of its highest accomplishments has been that Area Auto Racing News brought all of short track racing into focus as one. It has been a source for an area racer to get credit for what's been accomplished, get a photo of the car published and hopefully land sponsorship. Racers from one track got to know the other as our area of coverage grew.

I had an interesting conversation one time at Thompson (CT) Speedway. Billy Pauch, Jr. was running on the NASCAR Modified Tour as a rookie that year. I was in the middle of an interview with Mike Stefanik when Billy Pauch, Sr. walked

by. Stefanik stopped and said, "Is that Billy Pauch?" I confirmed it was. Stefanik said, "Wow, he's one of my heroes! Can you introduce me?" Pauch and Stefanik talked and talked. Without news coverage, Stefanik wouldn't have known who Pauch was. All because he read about him. I think we, Area Auto, started that, at least on the local level.

Candy's Note – *There is so much more that could be told of Lenny Sammons' incredible story. There just isn't the space in this interview for even half of it. Stop and talk to the man himself. It would be worth your time.*



Sammons hobnobs with everyone, from Dale Earnhardt and Brett Hearn...



to Ray Evernham and Jamie Tomaino...



It's good to be the boss.

A TIME FOR GIVING

This December marks the 34th year for the annual Christmas Holiday Party for students at the Matheny School in Peapack, NJ (www.matheny.org). The Matheny School is a private school for children and young adults with disabilities. Each year (pre-pandemic), a party was held at the school in December. Racers, media members and fans of our sport attended the parties, met the students, and gave gifts to them.

Longtime organizer Kevin Eyres, his wife Nan, their daughter Allison, and many "friends that are like family" are working hard to make this year's benefit a success.

Everyone is welcome to be a part of this very special tradition by making financial contributions. Donations to the benefit 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: rjccharities.com/donate.



Let's hope that a year from now, the traditional Christmas party will once again be held at the school. For 2021, thanks to the dedication of the "Matheny Racing Family", the students will still have a special holiday.



NEW MEMBERS

Tom Dancer
Henry Harnish
Norris Williams, Jr.

CONDOLENCES

Tim Day
Jerry Schiel

GET WELL WISHES

Sandy Kelleher
Marty Van Druten



TIM DAY

In October, the club lost a longtime member and club supporter. Tim Day was regularly on hand for meetings, club projects, car shows, Motorsports, banquet setup and 50/50 raffle sales. He rarely missed a night of racing at Wall Stadium, where his race commentaries were often insightful—and funny. He was also an avid fisherman and dog lover. Tim lived in Brick with his wife Nancy.



Tim Day (L) with Butch Malsbury (C) and George Klein (R). Photo by Linda Cooper

PHOTO TRIVIA

Here's a good one for you. At what track, and in what year was this photo taken? Hint: it looks like it was a mild November day. How many of these drivers (and officials) can you name? Doesn't it seem like only a few years ago?



Look for the answer in our next issue, or go to our website www.gsvscc.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.

Bob Menschner - Longtime Wall Stadium, Indoor Series Track Crew Member; Racing With Jesus Chaplain, Passes At Age 72

by EARL KRAUSE - Area Auto Racing News edition of September 28, 2021

Waretown, NJ – Bob Menschner, dedicated to NJ’s Wall Stadium for over 50 years as a Track Crew Member, “Whatever Needs to be Done” Person and Chaplain, died on September 21, 2021 at age 72 after a brief illness. He resided in Waretown.

“Bob was truly ‘Wall Stadium’, this was the place that he called his ‘second home’ during the week and every Saturday night,” said Wall track operator Diane Krause, echoing the words of daughter Emily, General Manager. “There was no ‘job description’ for Bob; he did everything here. He was an ambassador for Wall wherever he went. “Bob was a member of our family for the past ten years that we’ve been here [operating Wall Stadium] and, through the [Racing with Jesus] ministry, was there to counsel our racers— all of us, actually. When he presented the invocation each Saturday at the grandstand, and at the drivers meeting in the pit area, it offered optimism...and when he spoke about those who had passed away, it gave comfort to their family and friends.”



Setting up the sign.



Bob’s wheels at the track.

Bob also helped as trophy sponsor and ATOMRA Chaplain. “When we raced at Wall, I always looked forward to Bob’s golf cart pulling up and him coming over with a handshake and smile,” said ATOMRA driver and President Buddy Sload. “Bob was a great friend and supporter of the ATOMRA,” continued Buddy. “Our drivers’ meetings, Victory Lane celebrations and banquets will never be the same. His spirit will live on with all of us. He will forever be missed.” On that Saturday at Wall, Buddy Sload drove the Colin Martin #36 to victory in the ATOMRA feature and emotionally dedicated it to Bob and John-John.

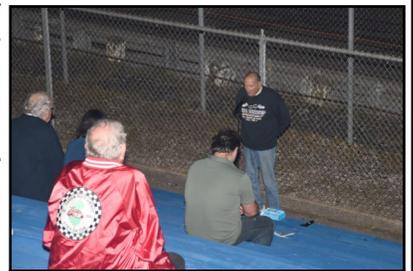
Bob Menschner loved the history of Wall Stadium, and recorded much of it on film in the 1970s and ‘80s with a small pocket camera while on the Track Crew. Those photos were in his personal racing scrapbook. This past year, good friend Kevin Eyres scanned and sent the pictures to the 3WidesPictureVault.com historic racing website to let its visitors see the dedication of Bob to his home track.



Prayer cards, personal condolences & memories on display at Bob’s memorial service at Wall Stadium.

At Wall, Garden State Vintage Stock Car Club (GSVSCC) President Ray Shea showcased Bob’s racing life with photos of him at the track on view in the grandstand midway. In 2001, the GSVSCC honored Bob with its “Lifetime Achievement in Racing” award. “Bob was always there for anyone who needed his kind words. I will miss his invocations at our meetings and at Wall,” reflected Ray Shea. “As the GSVSCC celebrates its 30th anniversary, this summer Bob presented me with a beautiful plaque honoring my 30 years as club President. He was very emotional when he presented it, showing how much he cared for all of us in the club.”

Bob Menschner was also a loyal staff member of Len Sammons Productions. He worked on the infield track crew for every Indoor Racing Series event, beginning with the Atlantic City Boardwalk Hall location in January 2003. He also served as a Chaplain with the Indoor Series, meeting with the racers and often presenting the opening invocation. He was on the staff of the annual Motorsports Show – again, as one of those who could be counted on to do any job that was needed, and to do it well. Bob also traveled regularly to PA’s Evergreen Raceway on behalf of Racing with Jesus Ministries.



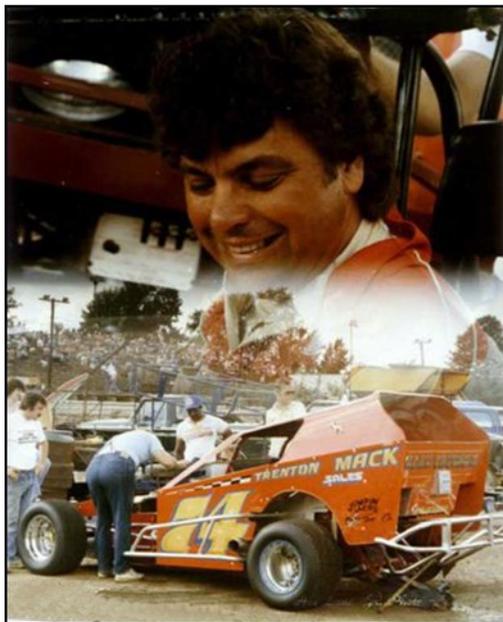
Ray Shea spoke at the memorial.

A memorial service was held at Wall Stadium on Friday, October 8, 2021 from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. It took place in the track grandstands, with Bob’s own and “racing family” sharing their special memories of Bob’s life.

Bob Menschner was retired from Brockway Glass in Freehold, NJ as a Machine Operator. Bob is survived by his father, John (who was originally on the Wall track crew and introduced him to racing); his dear friend and ex-wife Laurie Vreeland; children Janai, Tara (Rayna) and Rob, Jr. (Claudia); and grandsons Tyler, Caleb, Brady, Aiden and Connor; brothers John, Jr. and William; and sisters Carol, Elizabeth and Jean. He was pre-deceased by his mom, Henrietta, and a sister, Joanne. *Photos by Jim Smith*

PHOTO TRIVIA ANSWER

from the Summer 2021 issue



Ace Lane, Jr. Photo/Compliments of 3widespicturevault.com

Once a racer, always a racer... Here's a cool 1980s composite photo of a racer who hails from a town not far from the location of this photo. The really interesting thing is that he also raced during this past season—that's 2021. Who is this man of steel? Bonus: this driver also has ties to the subject of this issue's lead article: how?

Stan "The Man" Ploski, from Ringoes, NJ, began his racing career in 1962 as a teammate to his father, Stan, Sr., in identical yellow #27Sr. and #27Jr. 1937 Chevrolet Sportsman coupes. Ploski, Jr. went on to have a stellar career as a dirt racer.

Ploski's rookie season ended with the 1962 NJ State Novice Championship. He won 18 *straight* Sportsman races at **Flemington** (NJ) **Speedway** the next year, prompting management to upgrade him to the Modified division.

Ploski racked up multiple wins every season. Some wins came in his #27Jr Chevys; some came in other cars – like Dick Cozze's #80; Paul Deasey's #707; **Ken Brenn, Sr.**'s #24 coupe; the Norcia brothers' #81; Pete Chesson's #76; Mike O'Shea's #74; and the Critelli \$. The Brenn/Ploski team had much success in the early '70s: they took down two Flemington Modified titles (1971 and 1973); Flemington's 1973 National Dirt Track

Championship 200, the 1973 East Windsor championship, and 1973 NJ State Modified honors. Also in 1973 were two 100 lapper victories at Five Mile Point Speedway in Kirkwood, NY. Ploski's last Modified championship came in 1977 at Flemington Speedway, in one of the few Chevy Gremlins built by Kenny Weld. He was still going strong into the 1980s. He won two Tri-Track 100 lappers in the #74 "Bulldog Express" cars (above photo). His last Modified win at Flemington was on August 10, 1985.

Ploski demonstrated that he is not only a talented driver on dirt by racing the newly-paved and redesigned Langhorne (PA) Speedway in 1965. He finished a respectable second to Bill Slater in the National Open Race of Champions.

He retired after the 1990 season, when Flemington Speedway was paved. Until...

In June, 2019 Ploski took a wicked ride in a wingless Sprint car at New Egypt (NJ) Speedway. After winning his heat race, he had a hard flip down the front stretch in the feature. He was hospitalized for a few days as a precaution. Thankfully, Ploski had no injuries, but he certainly had some stretched muscles. Other issues kept him out of the cockpit for the 2020 season.

Fast-forward to the 2021 season. Ploski ran the season in a wingless Sprint car at New Egypt Speedway. He finished 9th in points for the season. Not bad for a 77-year old hotshoe!



Thanks to the Eastern Motorsports Press Association (www.empaonline.org), Earl Krause, and Pete Wortman for contributing to this piece.



Photos by Harry Meeks.

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

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