



Vintage Views

The official publication of the
Garden State Vintage Stock Car Club

Dedicated to the Preservation of Stock Car Racing History
July, August, September 2021

Kenn Brenn, Sr. Is the Patriarch of a Respected New Jersey Racing Family

by Earl Krause, from Area Auto Racing News, July 27, 2021

Ken Brenn, Sr., at 94-years-young, has a friendly and welcoming personality and a memory that details every lap of a career in the sport that goes back to the early 1950s. He is always a welcome visitor at both current-day and vintage motorsports gatherings. It's also the same in telephone conversations about his racing and fascinating, overall life - a talk we had just last week. Indeed, he has lived it all in our sport!

Race teams and fans of New Jersey dirt Modified racing in the 1970s and '80s are well aware of his sterling career as a car owner. In that era of big-block competition, he fielded the yellow and red-trimmed #24 racecars driven by his sons, Ken, Jr. and Jimmy. Sadly, Ken, Jr. passed away in 2019.

While the team was perhaps most closely-identified with its Saturday night home track (NJ's legendary dirt "square" Flemington Fairgrounds Speedway), the Warren, NJ-based Brenn entries were also among the best at East Windsor (NJ) Speedway as well as farther afield - places like the Moody Mile at the New York State Fairgrounds in Syracuse; on the DIRT circuit, or even earlier, on the All Star Stock Car Racing League for Modifieds.

Ken Sr. was proud to have his sons wheel his Modifieds. In addition, his drivers in that division included Stan Ploski, Jr., Billy Osmun, Sammy Beavers and Will Cagle. But there is also a large chapter of Ken Brenn, Sr.'s racing life that spanned the 1950s and '60s - the "Mighty Midgets."

MIDGET RACING MASTER: while Ken Brenn, Sr.'s place in East Coast dirt Modified racing is well-known, he also set



Johnny Coy at speed.
Photo by Al Consoli.

the standard in Midget cars as a leader in that segment of our sport in the 1950s and '60s. That's why the Thunder on the Hill event at PA's Grandview Speedway on Tuesday, August 3, 2021 with the USAC National Series Midgets that opens the groups Eastern

Swing, and the weekly Grandview Modifieds, is appropriately titled the "Ken Brenn Midget Masters." Indeed, it recognizes and honors his grand career with the "Mighty Midgets" on the local level and nationally.



Rodger Ward was all smiles at the Formula Libre in 1959.

He will then be an honored guest and host at the Eastern Museum of Motor Racing (EMMR) at the Latimore Valley (PA) Fairgrounds on September 11, when Midget racing, past and present, will be in the spotlight. The "Look Back at Midget Racing...from Midgets to Indy" program will salute drivers who had success in Midgets and then went on to compete, and win, at the Indianapolis 500. There will also be an overview of Midget history, from the 1930s up to the present era, locally and nationally.

EARLY INSPIRATION: Ken Brenn, Sr.'s introduction to our sport came from watching Midget races in the late 1930s at the Olympic Park track in the northern New Jersey city of Irvington. He went there with his father, whose friend had a Midget. After Ken, Sr. served our country in the Marine Corps, he became the owner of a Midget for the first time in



Johnny Coy drove this Brenn Midget at an ARDC event in 1971.
www.nemahistory.com Photo

1954. Learning by trial and error, he built his team into one of the best on the touring circuits of the American Racing Drivers Club (ARDC) and NEMA (Northeastern Midget Association) Midget organizations, and with NASCAR, which had a Midget division in the 1950s.

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.

He became a champion car owner with ARDC in 1963, 1964, 1968, 1969 and 1971; with the NASCAR Midgets, and was ARDC President in 1969 and '70. In 1959, Indianapolis 500 winner Rodger Ward drove the Brenn Midget to victory against a field of sports cars at CT's Lime Rock Park road course in the unique "Formula Libre" event. This gained Ken, Sr. national recognition for the accomplishment.

Also driving Brenn Midgets over the years was another Indy 500 champion, Bobby Unser; along with ARDC Grand Master Len Duncan, Jiggs Peters, Vernon Land, Chuck Arnold, Charlie Miller, Bob Boone, Jerry Karl, Larry Dickson, Johnny Coy, Sr., Leigh Earnshaw, Jr., Jim Whitman, Bruce Walkup, Bob Harkey and Jim Caruthers; Modified stock car standouts Budd Olsen, Tommie Elliott and Don Kreitz, Sr.; URC champion Earl Halaquist and Central PA Sprint Car greats Bobbie Adamson and Ray Tilley.

VERSATILE OWNER: along with the Midgets from the Brenn team, drivers from various racing disciplines have strapped into the meticulous looking and prepared Brenn open-cockpit cars.

Brenn also owned URC and USAC Sprint Cars, and fielded USAC Champ Cars at Indianapolis and on that circuit. At the "Month of May 1967" for the Indianapolis 500, Brenn fielded the Gerhardt chassis rear-engine #57 Indy Car with Midget car standout Bob Harkey driving. The New Jersey-based team came so close in qualifying time to making it into that year's "500." But they were there!

A LEADER, ON AND OFF THE TRACK: there is so much more to Ken Brenn, Sr.'s Hall of Fame racing life.

For many years, he was the hands-on operator of a large-scale construction company, bearing his family name, based in Warren. In fact, under Ken's guidance, his business did the construction and paving of NJ's Pine Brook Speedway when it was founded by Dick Marlow in 1962.

Brenn, his late wife Dorothy, and their children: Ken, Jr., Jimmy, Chris, Elaine, Bill, and Kathleen called Warren, NJ home. In fact, Brenn served as Warren's Mayor for multiple terms. For Ken Sr., it's family, and friends that are like family, that will always come first. Sons Ken, Jr. and Jimmy proudly followed their dad down the racing road!

KEN BRENN, JR: Ken, Jr. displayed a natural, "I was born to do this" ability and smooth style from the beginning of his career. He was Flemington's very first Rookie Sportsman champion in 1972 while wheeling dad Ken, Sr.'s yellow and red-trimmed coupe. After multiple Rookie Sportsman wins and a brief time in the regular Sportsman division, he moved into the big-block Modifieds full time in 1974. He competed regularly in NJ at the tough weekly circuit of East Windsor on Fridays (where he had 24 wins) and Saturdays at Flemington. There were also trips south to NJ's Bridgeport Speedway, netting two Modified victories and memorable runs at Syracuse. But it was at Flemington where Ken Brenn, Jr. excelled.

He won 59 big-block Modified features there in its fabled dirt era of the 1970s and '80s, and was Modified champion in 1982-'83. Ken, Jr. was one of the veteran Flemington dirt racers who made the transition to its paved surface (1991-2000) with success. During his time on Flemington's pavement, he set a speed record for one lap in the Dirt/Asphalt Modified division of 16.9 seconds around the "square," and later lowered it to 16.4.

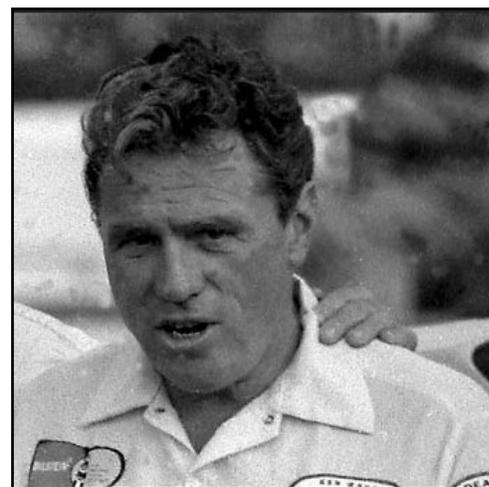
Along the dirt speedpaths, he wheeled other top cars to victory. That included Jim Romeo's #44Jr., the Trenton (NJ) Mack #74, and Jim Stashluk's #71 on dirt; and later in Flemington Speedway's 1990s pavement era, Benny Scheer's #1a.



Popular driver Stan Ploski *Ely Photo*



The 1967 Gerhardt Indy car. *AARN Photo*



Younger days. *Photo by Dave Condit*



Ken Brenn, Jr. in a Brenn Modified, late 1980s
Photo by Dave Pratt



Jimmy Brenn (20) and Ken Brenn, Jr. (outside) at Flemington, early 1980s
Photo by Ace Lane, Jr.



Brenn, Sr. with his racing sons, Jimmy (L) and Ken (R). Flemington Speedway Historical Society Photo



Brenn, Sr. takes questions at the Phillipsburg (NJ) Mall Show in 2015 as Ken, Jr. and Jimmy stand by. Photo by Lenny Swider

Ken Brenn, Jr. will always be remembered as one of the finest drivers in NJ and Northeast dirt Modified racing. Even more than his Hall of Fame stats, he was a special person who put his family and countless friends first. In his racing days, Ken, Jr. had a ready smile and welcomed fans and media members who stopped by his pit.

Ken Brenn, Jr. remained a true champion, until the sad day in May 2019, when his final checkered flag waved.

JIMMY BRENN: in the late-1970s and into the '80s, young Jimmy Brenn became an established and popular racer at Flemington and on the circuit as well. Although he didn't race as long as brother Ken, Jr., there was never any doubt, then and now, that Jimmy had that same talent and commitment to excellence.

Jimmy started in a family-owned yellow and red #24, like his brother before him. He first raced at Flemington in the spring of 1978. He, too, put his name into the record books as Rookie Sportsman champion. He then moved into the regular Sportsman ranks and through 1980 at Flemington had nine feature wins in the division.

Jimmy carried his dedication into the Modifieds and raced them for several more years. He then stepped away from active competition and became a successful businessman in the construction/building industry.

On a memorable night in 1982, Ken, Jr. and Jimmy split the Twin-20s Modified features at Flemington. Their "racing family", led by dad Ken, Sr. celebrated in Victory Lane to the cheers of the crowd.

HALL OF FAME, IN RACING AND LIFE: Ken Brenn, Sr. has been inducted into the Halls of Fame of the NJ-based Garden State Vintage Stock Car Club and original, Flemington Speedway-based National Old Timers Auto Racing Club and the Eastern Motorsport Press Association; in 2014, he received the "Tas Award" (in memory of Modified driving legend Al Tasnady) by the Flemington Speedway Historical Society and was Grand Marshal of the Dirt Track Heroes Show in Phillipsburg, NJ; entered the National Midget Auto Racing Hall of Fame in 2008; and was the 2014 recipient of the Northeast Modified Hall of Fame (Weedsport, N.Y.) "Gene DeWitt Car Owner Award. Each honor has certainly recognized Ken Brenn Sr.'s winning record, but most-importantly, his integrity and professionalism in life.

PERSPECTIVE: the words of racing historian Gary Mondschein, who publishes the excellent Classic Racing Times magazine, spoke of what Ken Brenn means to him in a conversation we had several years ago. Gary's words put it in perspective. "Ken Brenn is a man that I have admired for years, initially as a young fan when I would sit in the grandstand and watch him, from afar, as I viewed him on the track and in the pit area with his always-immaculate race cars. he just had this 'presence' and the respect of everyone," reflected Gary. "As I grew older, and got involved in racing as a driver and then from the administrative side, I learned more about Ken Brenn the man, about the respect that he had from people, not just in racing; but from his time in business and in the community. He became, to me, the role model for how to conduct myself in daily life."

JULY 21, 2021

The July meeting of the Garden State Vintage Stock Car Club was called to order by President Ray Shea at 7:40 p.m.

Bob Menschner gave the invocation.

A moment of silence was held for the passing of Jim Hendrickson, Jr., a son of the late well-known racer from Long Island, Jim Hendrickson, Sr.

Get-well wishes were offered to club members Tim Day, Marty Hines and Ronnie Kohler.

Ray announced that member Dottie Severage, widow of NJ racer Joe Severage, needs help with having some furniture moved from Tuckerton to Wall. If anyone can lend a hand, please let Ray know.

Former Modified and NASCAR Grand National driver Ronnie Kohler was to be presented at Wall Stadium with a plaque from the club for his racing career. Unfortunately, Ronnie suffered a stroke and was unable to attend the races.

Ken Brenn, Sr. will be having a look back to Midget racing, "From Midgets to Indy" at the Eastern Museum of Motor Racing in York Springs, PA on September 11, 2021. It sounds like it will be a great show.

The club is looking into taking one of the club's cars for a visit to a local vocational school in the Fall, so the students can examine and learn about it.

Ray announced that Fleming's Pumpkin Run will be held on November 6, 2021 at their location in Egg Harbor Township.

Club member and local racing historian Jeff Hardifer brought in a project he researched about gravel pit racing in NJ to show those in attendance. He donated them to the club. Thanks, Jeff.

Ray reminded folks that 30th anniversary polo shirts and decals are for sale. See or contact him if you are interested in buying shirts or decals.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

AUGUST 18, 2021

The August meeting of the Garden State Vintage Stock Car Club was called to order at 7:50 p.m. by Vice President Marty Van Druten. Seventeen members were in attendance.

Marty announced that President Ray Shea has not been feeling well and would not be joining us tonight.

Bob Menschner gave the invocation.

Get well wishes go out to Tim Day, Doug Peabody, Terry Van, and Ray Shea.

It was announced that Ken Brenn, Sr. is promoting a "Look Back to Midget Racing – from Midgets to Indy Cars" show on September 11, 2021. It will take place at the Eastern Museum of Motor Racing at Latimer Valley Fairgrounds in York Springs, PA.

Marty reminded the group that the 30th anniversary of the first gathering of this club was in August of 1991. An informal group gathered at Bill Erbe's house to gauge interest in forming a vintage stock car club. The rest is history, as they say. A round of applause was held in recognition of this milestone.

Fleming's Pumpkin Run will be held on November 6, 2021. This is always a fun day and we are looking forward to the event.

An opportunity to bring a club car to the Ocean County Vo-Tech school is expected in the Fall. They would like to have a car to show the students. Let Ray know if you are interested in bringing your car.

The newsletter has been mailed and will be arriving in your mailboxes shortly.

Marty announced that efforts are still being made to set a date at Wall Stadium for a static display. Four club cars will be on display at a time. Cars will arrive before the gates open and will remain until after the fans have left the stadium.

AI asked Doug Megill to announce a car show to be held at New Egypt Speedway on September 11, 2021. The show will be a fundraiser for the Tunnels to Towers foundation.

Doug Megill said he wants to work on establishing eligibility rules for club cars. He thinks we should admit cars that are younger than the restrictions that existed in the past. The gap for admitting cars under the existing requirements is too big. He said many cars, particularly dirt cars, are being lost to other clubs that race. Cars from the 1990s and early 2000s should be admitted as club cars. A discussion was held on this topic. It was agreed to have a meeting next month to discuss this fully.

The Patterson Greenhouses Fall Family Fun Day will be held on October 10, 2021. We look forward to having a good turnout.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 15, 2021

The September meeting of the Garden State Vintage Stock Car Club was called to order by President Ray Shea at 7:36 p.m. Seventeen members were in attendance.

Earl Krause informed the group of the following people who recently passed away: Ed Partridge, owner of #6 Modified Tour car currently driven by Ryan Preece, and owner of Riverhead Raceway; Bob Emmons, GSVSCC award recipient and friend to all in racing; 2009 Wall Stadium promoter Jim Morton, who kept the Stadium open until the present promoters, the Krause family, began promoting the track; longtime club member Dave McCann; Darlene Schneider, daughter of racing legend Frankie Schneider; club member and the wife of Hall of Fame honoree Joe Hall. A moment of silence was observed for these folks, along with members of the club that have passed on since the formation of the club on our 30th anniversary.

Ray welcomed longtime member Tim Day back to the meeting. Tim had some serious health issues and is doing better. We send get well wishes to Bob Menschner, who is currently experiencing illness.

Ray announced the 30th anniversary of the first meeting of what would become the Garden State Vintage Stock Car Club, which was officially on August 21, 1991. A round of applause was held. Ray and others present mentioned some past members that were so helpful during the club's existence. On a personal note, Ray said his experiences in the club have made for a fabulous journey. He has been so pleased to have met so many people as club President. He then introduced the current Officers (Vice President – Marty Van Druten; Treasurer – Jim Kelleher; Secretary Linda Cooper; Trustees Al Voorhees and Earl Krause). He said the club is doing well and moving forward. It's satisfying to see increased turnout at each month's meetings. We are looking for good times ahead!

Ray announced that the club's Annual Meeting will be held on November 17, 2021. He informed the membership that an Officers meeting was held on September 2, 2021. During this meeting, the bylaws were revised (which haven't been updated since 2002). Ray summarized the changes. Some new activities will be coming up. Volunteers will be needed for a couple of committees that will be formed soon.

Last weekend, Don Bruno and Ray attended the "From Midgets to Indy" car show promoted by Ken Brenn, Sr., held on the grounds of the Eastern Museum of Motor Racing in York Springs, PA. Ray said the museum is very impressive and is a "must-see". They have a top-notch inventory of display items. The library is fantastic and has materials about every aspect of racing.

UPCOMING EVENTS: The Patterson Greenhouses' Family Fun Day car show and fundraising event will be held on October 10. Fleming's Pumpkin Run will be held at their location in Egg Harbor Township on November 6.

Ray reminded the group that 30th anniversary polo shirts and decals are available for purchase. Shirt prices are as follows: sizes Small – XL - \$22; 2XL - \$24; 3XL - \$26. Decals cost \$3 each. Let him know if you want anything.

Like so many things, the club picnic has been postponed due to Covid. We look forward to having it next year. Volunteers will be needed to help things along. Look for your opportunity to help out!

The annual Hall of Fame banquet, postponed from 2020 (also due to Covid), is scheduled for March 20, 2022. We are looking forward to getting together. Remember: the new location will be the Spring Lake Manor, located on Route 71 in Spring Lake. New reservation forms will be sent out in coming months.

Ray talked about returning to Wall Stadium for static car displays. He is working with Diane and Emily Krause to try to make this happen. Ray listed new logistical requirements for the display.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:08 p.m., at which time 30th anniversary cake was enjoyed.



CONDOLENCES

Bob Emmons
 David McCann
 Bob Menschner
 Al Voorhees, on the passing of
 his mother-in-law
 Steve Yaccarino

GET WELL WISHES

Tim Day
 Larry Housman
 Pam Krause
 John Malsbury
 Doug Peabody
 Ray Shea
 Terry Van



NEW MEMBERS

Richard Morris
 Charlie Stone
 Rich Terruso



WHEN IS THE BANQUET?

You probably know the club's 29th Annual Hall of Fame Awards Dinner, originally scheduled for March of 2020, was rescheduled twice due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, it is necessary to reschedule the banquet once again. The new date will be **March 20, 2022**.

Not only that, our longtime banquet location, Branches, is no longer. Our new location will be the Spring Lake Manor, in Spring Lake, NJ.

We appreciate your patience and look forward to getting together next year to honor racing folks, chat and tell stories, and enjoy a nice meal.



LOOK SHARP

in a GSVSCC 30th Anniversary Polo Shirt!
Colors are Ash (gray heather) or White.

Costs per shirt are:

Small to XL—\$22;

2XL—\$24;

3XL—\$26.

Contact Ray Shea to purchase.

Also available for purchase are decals, \$3 each.



MUSEUM MAINTENANCE

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Did you know the club's membership includes an artist? Yes—**Bill Force** made these signs for the museum quite some time ago. Time being what it is, they became faded and needed serious refreshing. **THANKS** to Bill for bringing new life to the museum. *Photos by Ray Shea.*



ON SOLID GROUND

THANKS to the Leveling Crew for getting the club's museum situated: (L-R) Terry Van, Tim Gardner, Don Bruno, Jim Hall, Al Voorhees, Rich Parker, Charlie Stone and Charles Stone (photographer).



FROM MIDGETS TO INDY

A crowd of race fans showed up at the Eastern Museum of Motor Racing, located at the former Latimer Valley Speedway in York Springs, PA on September 11, 2021. *From Midgets to Indy*, a vintage car show produced by Ken Brenn, Sr., was the event of the day. It was a great show. *Photos by Ray Shea.*



PHOTO TRIVIA ANSWER

from the Winter 2021 issue



Here's clever advertising: "Racing · To · Night" - but where?

Get your seat cushion ready; come Friday night, we're going to **Vineland Speedway**. If only.

Vineland Speedway served as a center of auto racing in Cumberland County for 10 years during the mid-20th century.

It debuted as a half-mile dirt track on Palm Sunday, 1955. Grandstand seats sold for less than a dollar each and opening day traffic backed up for miles.

Every weekend, crowds braved noise, mosquitoes, and dust to watch favorites such as Al Tasnady, Elton Hildreth, Wally Dallenbach and Pete Frazee spar for the checkered flag.

By the late 1950s, the racetrack expanded three-fold. It was paved in 1958, and a 1.5-mile sports car road course that also combined a quarter-mile drag strip was added.

Typically, stock car races took place on Friday nights, with drag races on Saturday nights and sports car or motorcycle events on Sundays.

Despite the fun, the track was estimated to be losing thousands of dollars per week by 1959.

This happened for numerous reasons. Among them, promoter Bill Nocco, who didn't own the land on which the track was built, was forced to lease it from several parties. Bad weather also was a factor, with losses of \$1,000 reported for each rainstorm.

The largest dark cloud, however, would come from the town of Pitman. In 1960, Nocco acquired Pitman's Alcyon Speedway - a dirt track - and closed it. His hope was to improve attendance in Vineland, which had an asphalt track.

Rather than increasing, attendance in Vineland dwindled as the 1960s wore on and the novelty of the speedway wore off. By 1964, the Vineland Times Journal reported that the attraction had fallen out of favor with many locals.

As a final blow, in February 1965, some 75 acres off Sherman Avenue were chosen for the site of the community college. Although part of that land was already being leased for the racetrack, a "resolution" required that operations would cease by the time the school was completed.

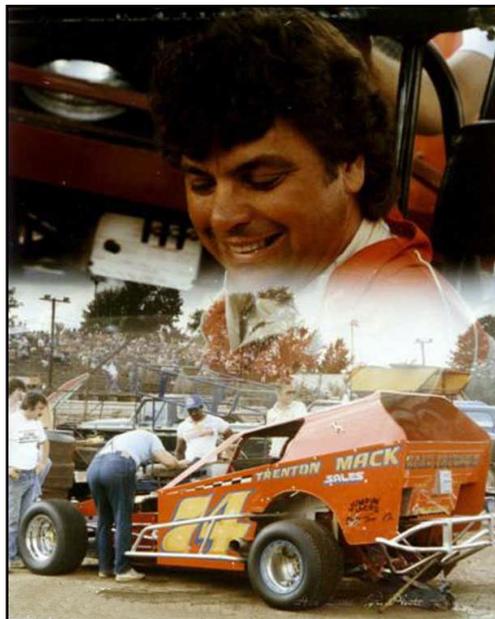
What the college didn't kill, faltering crowds did. In July 1965, the speedway quietly closed.

Today, College Drive cuts through parts of the old track, and the former raceway grounds are largely overgrown with foliage.

Source: Doug Fuhrmann, www.thedailyjournal.com
June 16, 2015

PHOTO TRIVIA

Once a racer, always a racer...



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

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?

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.

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