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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 on South Delsea Drive, was a sign of things to come.

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 had been 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 different 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.