

The Preservationist

The Member Newsletter of the Elkhart Lake Historic Race Circuits Preservation Society

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Society To Collect Historic Materials

One of the Preservation Society's goals for 2012 is to expand its collection of historic materials related to the 1950, 51 and 52 Elkhart Lake open road races. Although the Society has accumulated a small collection of film, photos, articles and records, it is well known that there is a huge reservoir of material tucked away in attics, garages, drawers and boxes that with the passage of time is likely to be discarded and lost forever. The Board hopes that the Preservation Society can eventually establish a Resource Center that will serve as a reference library for anyone desiring to learn about the history of the races or to research the participants, the cars and the race results. Members who have materials they can donate to the collection or who know of others who may have pertinent materials should contact, HRC archivist, Mark Pfaller. Mark's office phone number in Plymouth is 920-892-8585 and his cell phone number is 414-704-8586.

HRC Partners With Road America to Establish a Secure Shopping Service

Although HRC has maintained an HRC Store page on its web site for several years, the site has never offered a secure online shopping service for credit card purchases. Instead potential purchasers have been asked to download an order form and mail the form with the credit card information to the HRC P.O. Box, a rather slow and less than secure process. Now as a result of a joint venture with Road America's 4-mile store, HRC is able to offer a secure shopping cart service to individuals wishing to purchase HRC Merchandise.

To use the service go to the HRC internet web site www.historicracecircuits.com and click on the HRC Store tab. Then click on the link near the bottom of the page to enter the store. Once on the Store page select the items to purchase and specify the quantity and proceed to check out. As soon as the order has been accepted, 4-mile store personnel will process and ship the selected items the same day.

This partnership saves HRC the substantial expense of creating and maintaining a shopping cart service and in addition gives potential purchasers access to the entire Road America 4-mile store online inventory. Check it out for yourself. *(Note: If you have previously visited the HRC web site, you may need to refresh your browser.)*

Spring Dinner Social Plans Announced

The Spring Dinner Social will again be held at Siebkens on Thursday, May 17th concurrent with the Spring Vintage Weekend. The cash bar will be open from 6pm until 7:30 after which dinner will be served. The program for the evening will be presented by Michael Argetsinger. Mike will talk about the parallels of the early days of racing in Elkhart Lake and Watkins Glen and the bonds between his family and Cliff Tufte and other early leaders of motorsport activities in Elkhart Lake. Mike will try to have some copies of his latest book on the grand prix years at Watkins Glen available for purchase and signing at the event. All of the proceeds from the book go to benefit the Watkins Glen Motorsport Research Center. Mark your calendar and plan to attend the spring meeting.

A Little Known Store Behind the “THE LAST RACE”

This year is the 60th Anniversary of the last open road race in and around the Village of Elkhart Lake held on September 7, 1952. Sports car racing on the public roads around Elkhart Lake was then at the pinnacle of its success. The 1952 races featured some of the best known names in sports car racing of the time including; Briggs Cunningham and his team drivers John Fitch and Phil Walters, future world champion Phil Hill, Sherwood Johnson and Bill Spear. Both in terms of spectator appeal and prestige in the sports car racing world, the Elkhart Lake road races had gained national and international recognition. The Village Race Committee and the SCCA had already begun plans for the 1953 races but they were not to be! Before the sun could set on the far side of the lake, it was over! Race Chairman, C. Bayard Sheldon, picked up the phone and called Governor Kohler asking him to invoke that “Right of Access” law bringing the Elkhart Lake open road racing era to a close. The 1952 Elkhart Lake Cup race would go down in history as “The Last Race”!

At the time the Sheboygan Press reported that problems with crowd control were to blame. Sheldon told reporters that the crowds had simply grown beyond the point where the organizers felt that spectator safety could be assured... but that may not have been the entire story!

In a letter dated May 1998, Sheldon, who had relocated to New Zealand, intimated that internal conflict among the SCCA Race Committee had developed making the ability to stage the 1953 event problematic at best. It seems that with the rapid growth of the spectator crowds, proceeds from the sale of programs and parking fees had developed into a rather sizable fund. Although the organizers had promised to share the proceeds with the Village, the SCCA Committee members had fallen out over what portion of those funds should go to the Village



Race Chairman C. Bayard Sheldon on the left with Village Race Committee members (left center to right), Clif Tuft, James Johnson and Ray Kramer

and specifically to whom they should go. Sheldon could see that the promises made to the Village Organizing Committee were not going to be kept and that the resulting conflict would make it difficult if not impossible to stage another race. He never clarified the exact details of the dispute but did say that the dispute as much as the crowd-control issues, played a major role in his decision to call Governor Kohler canceling the 1953 races.

The Village organizers tried desperately to find a way to continue open road racing but the future of sports car racing in Elkhart Lake turned out to be in closed course racing and the founding of Road America. While the SCCA supported the races at Road America, none of the original ten SCCA Race Committee members had a part in its building and most never raced there.

2012 Membership Pins are on order and Membership Renewal Notices will be going out shortly.

