

The Preservationist

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

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HRC Spring Dinner Event

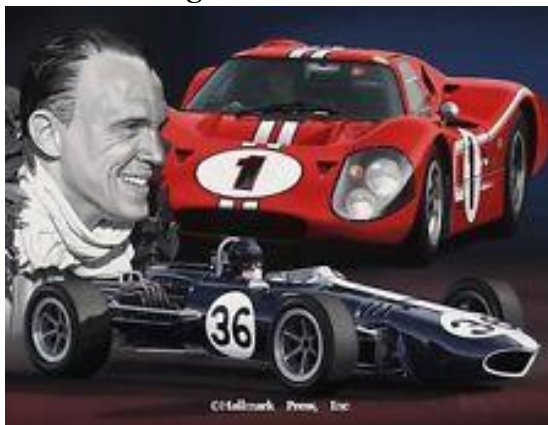
Thursday, May 17

Siebkens in Elkhart Lake

Join us for a remembrance of the life of racing legend Dan Gurney and the fabulous All American Racers' Eagle race cars. During his racing career Dan raced in Sports Cars, Formula 1, NASCAR, Can-Am and Indy Cars. He was also an innovative constructor and team owner. He did it all and was always the "coolest man in the room". Dan came to Elkhart Lake many times both as a driver and team owner. He was a member of the Sebring International Raceway Hall of Fame and the West Coast Stock Car Hall of Fame. In 1990 he was inducted into the International Motorsports Hall of Fame.

The guest speaker will be Jacques Dresang, a motorsport historian with a special interest in Dan Gurney. Jacques and his father, Rick, operate Kettle Moraine Preservation and

Restoration where they have restored some of the most historic Eagles to their former glory. Much has been written about Dan Gurney over the years and since his death in January, but Jacques will present a program that goes beyond the usual biographical profile for a much closer look at Gurney's life and contribution to American motorsports.



Daniel Sexton Gurney 1931 - 2018

The Event will be held at the historic Siebkens Resort on Thursday, May 17th. A cash bar will begin at 5:30 in the Tavern. Dinner will be at 7:00 in the Dining Room followed by the main program at 8:00.

Your invitation is currently in the mail. Use the reservation form at the bottom of the invitation and make your pre-paid reservations early. It will help both HRC and Siebkens in planning for the event.

Historic Elkhart Lake Race Course

By Augie Pabst

***Preface** - The following article is Augie Pabst's fantasy of what it would have been like to race in the 1952 Kimberly Cup race. It was written in 2009 at the height of the struggle to preserve the Historic Race Circuits was included in the Resource Management Plan adopted in 2010 under which the Historic Circuits are protected. Photos have been added.*

Start/Finish Line: Gottfried Street near the feed mill about 100 yards north of the convergence with Lake and Rhine Streets where the railroad crossing, bank and Schuler's bar (now Lake Street Café) are situated.

Its 1952 again and I'm strapped into a period HRG roadster amidst fifty or so drivers in the best of what Europe has to offer, each set on doing well in the fifteen lap race around Elkhart Lake for the Kimberly Cup. Few if any cars have roll bars, seat

belts are ribbed three inch army surplus, leather straps span most bonnets and the array of headgear ranges from leather football helmets to British Cromwells.

Up ahead on the Gottfried Street grid, a bit north of the feed mill, sits "Gentleman" Jim Kimberly in his bright red Ferrari. Briggs Cunningham in an MG and off to my right, Bill Spear is in an OSCA and all the way from California, the great Johnnie von Neumann awaits the start in one of those new little Porsches. My adrenaline level would have been high, as it was some years later when I first sat on a grid in my TR-3. Crowds line the street, pretty girls strain to see daring young drivers and men wearing suits and ties crane their necks to get a look at the colorful cars spaced out on the street before them.

Race Officials scurried from one car to another



The start of the Kimberly Cup race.

checking lap straps and soon the starter appeared before the first two cars, circling his green flag overhead as a signal for all drivers to fire 'em up. When satisfied, he strolled to one side and then, with a flourish, waived it high in the air as each driver pops the clutch and speeds off down Gottfried Street.



The turn onto Lake Street.

where most likely a fair number of drivers and crew members knocked down a few Blue Ribbon beers the night before. Next up an eighty degree hard left with Siebkens Resort at the apex and the Schwartz Resort on the right where later an MG crashed through a snow fence injuring eight

The first turn is immediately upon us in the form of a dogleg right onto Lake Street quickly passing the Elkhart Lake Bank on the left and Schuler's Bar across the street



MG crashed at the Hard Left.

spectators, none seriously. Then downhill and soon, if I cared to look, was a quick glimpse of the pristine lake on my right before passing Camp Harrand on the left, Fireman's Park on the right and soon after, the County Garage where tech inspection was held. Coming up is Wacker's Wend, a mild 120 degree right, and shortly after still another right into Hamill's Hollow where, in the shadow of Grasshopper Hill, on a high bank ten feet above the road, sit picnicking fans witnessing the high speed maneuvering through undulating esses before the blind turn leading to the high speed two mile School House Straight where I can air it out with my foot to the floor. I straddle the center line of the narrow twenty foot wide crowned road to avoid tire scrub and with little room for error and, as best I can, maintain a safe distance from the ever present ditches and gullies. Those who raced here in bigger bore Allards, Cunninghams, Jaguars and Ferraris had to reach 120, maybe 130 miles per hour or even more, earning my admiration for their skill and daring.



The right-turn into Hamill's Hollow.

Downshifting and scuffing off speed, I approach the 90 degree flat right hand Kimberly's Korner and wonder how many went off here? Made it through all right, onto another long straight through beautiful



Kimberly's Korner

Wisconsin farmland and then a pair of doglegs - first a blind right at Dickens Ditch, followed by a left and then a mile run before carefully navigating a deceptive right at the Marsh Turn where it, if not approached correctly, could result in an off road excursion into hay bales on the outside shoulder.



The Marsh Turn.

With that in my rear view mirror, it's flat out for over a mile, then a stretch of undulating esses, before approaching the Gottfried Street start/finish line and the feed mill signaling the start of lap two.

I was present in 1952, spectating with a good friend, enjoying the in-town action and then from a spot along a country lane. Needless to say, that experience created the spark leading to a career that took me to every part of America, to Canada and Europe, the Bahamas and even to Africa as a result of my relationships with generous car owners.

Today, as in the past, stories of wild on and off track Elkhart Lake adventures ring out in the barrooms of Siebkens and the Schwartz. While converted into a shop, the feed mill remains and the train depot still overlooks the main business district, although passenger trains have long since stopped serving Chicago summer people. Camp Harrand, a summer haven for the arts, is long past

***About the Author** – HRC Member Life Augie Pabst began a successful racing career in 1956, first in SCCA production cars and later in high performance modified or Sports Racing cars. In 1959 he was crowned USAC Professional Road Racing Champion having amassed points in his Ferrari Testa Rosa and the Meister Brau Team Scarab. The following year he drove the same Scarab to SCCA's B-Modified National Championship and was named U.S. Driver of the Year by Competition Press.*

Internationally he raced at Brands Hatch, Mosport, Nurburgring, Nassau, Sebring, Riverside, Laguna Seca, Daytona and several times at Lemans where in the 1961 24 Hours Race had a best finish of fourth overall with co-driver Dick Thompson in Briggs Cunningham's Maserati Tipo 63. Over the years he amassed numerous wins at Road America driving for the Cunningham, Meister Brau, John Mecom and Luigi Chinetti's North American Racing Team(s). He also occasionally competed in USAC stock car races.

Pabst resides in the Village of Oconomowoc Lake, Wisconsin and was a regular vintage racer at Road America.

The World's Fastest Isetta

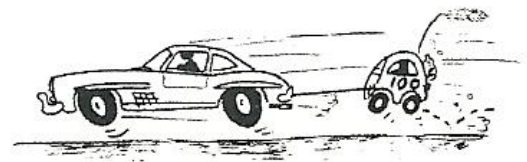
By Fred R. Egloff

It was in 1957, over sixty years ago, that a speed of 100 mph was exceeded in a BMW Isetta 300. Let me assure you at the outset that this was not accomplished under its own power. The fascinating story has been told many times with many variations over the years. In recent years the legend has reached mythic proportions with several different people claiming they were driving the car. This leads me to write once and for all a definitive report describing the event, the incidents leading up to it and the people involved.

In the 1950s, the Mille Miglia 1000 mile road race was considered the most grueling sports car event on the International calendar. The Chicago Region of the SCCA at that time conducted a National Rally

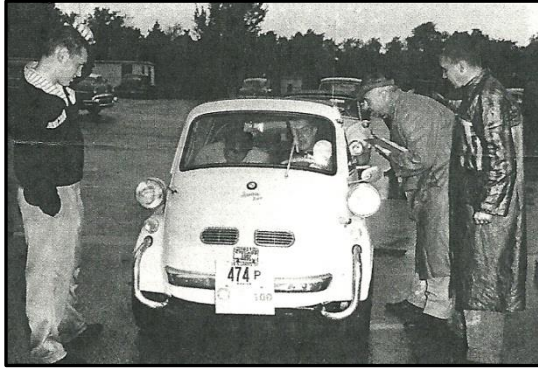
and in its place is the magnificent Osthoff Hotel and yet in all, the Village of Elkhart Lake and nearby roads are pretty much the same as they were almost sixty years ago.

In the Village, across the street from the railroad depot and bank, sits a State Historical Marker proclaiming the importance of the original road course. Other smaller plaques around the course identify turns, straights and geographical spots, most named after those first responsible for creating these spectacular events that led to the construction of Road America and have for these many years meant so much to the Village of Elkhart Lake, Sheboygan County, its citizens and racing fans from far and wide.



patterned after that race called the Lake Michigan Miglia. It was a high speed rally (only maximums between checkpoints) covering about 1300 miles circling Lake Michigan in a day and a half. There were usually about 100 entries many of which were race drivers competing in their hottest road machines. By sheer luck my first attempt at the event in 1956 resulted in a first overall. Shortly thereafter Road & Track reported that a BMW Isetta had won its class in the International Mille Miglia. It wasn't long before I began to think that it would be a hoot to run one of the 298 cc, 13 bhp "Eggs" on the 1957 Lake Michigan Miglia against all the Ferraris, Mercedes and big iron. I mentioned it to my regular navigator, Robert Stone Jordan, who was evidently as nuts as I was.

The Isetta was new on the American market and for some inexplicable reason was being sold by Buick dealers. Bob was a very persuasive individual and soon talked Dick Ashby of Broadway Buick in Chicago with providing us a vehicle for the competitive event. The dealer's shop "souped" it up so that it would go all of 60 or 65 miles-per-hour. It only took a few practice runs before we got used to the left hand shifter and its shift pattern. The Rally Committee thought it was a joke when we entered but were awe-struck when we appeared an hour late (overslept) at the starting line in Waukegan.



The Rally Officials puzzling over the Isetta at the starting line in Waukegan.

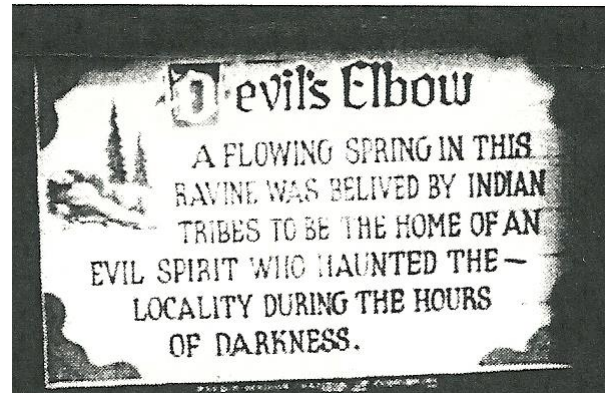
Going through Chicago we discovered that it was the perfect vehicle for heavy traffic. We could and did resort to the sidewalks when the road got too crowded. The police either didn't believe their eyes or couldn't understand how it could go fast enough to break the law. The riding comfort was classic sports car, reminiscent of a type 35 Bugatti. In all fairness I must admit that we were just able to walk at the end.

On the first leg we had to switch onto reserve gas while zooming east on the Indiana Tollway. Neither Bob nor I knew how far the reserve would carry us, so we took a big gamble at one point hoping we would make it to the next plaza without getting off the Tollway. The La Porte plaza turned out to be a surprise checkpoint. After our time was recorded (exactly on time) the engine died and we pushed our egg to the pumps for a refill.

Once we got off the Tollway and onto the back roads we discovered another advantage that the Isetta had. The bigger cars, like Jaguars and Porsches, had to slow down for the little towns. We just kept going flat out. People's jaws would drop as we passed because no one had ever seen a car like it

before. We did have one incident with the police in mid-Michigan, when once again we were on reserve. Bob was at the wheel when he spotted a gas station on a far corner and blew through a stop sign. As we passed the corner I saw a police car waiting just around the corner watching for just such an infraction. After recovering from their surprise the officers pulled up behind us at the gas pump. We informed them what we were doing and explained that we would be disqualified if we got a ticket. They took one look at our fancy opponents passing by, gave us a pass, wished us luck and said, "Go gettun guys".

Despite its unstable appearance, we had little trouble keeping ahead of the average through an area known as "Nightmare Alley". It was a snakey stretch of sand, gravel and dirt driven in the dark and running along the edge of Lake Michigan between Harbor Springs and Mackinaw City. It is a section later used on the POR. On only one occasion did we leave the road; there a sign informed us that we were at the "Devil's Elbow", legendarily haunted by evil spirits during the hours of darkness.



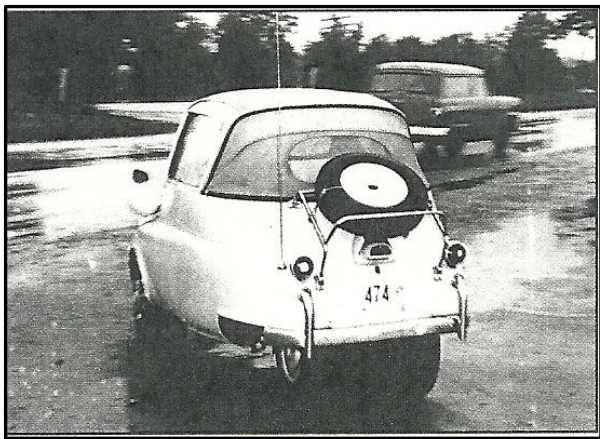
This is what we saw as we slid off the road in NIGHTMARE ALLEY... not very reassuring.

I was at the wheel and still claim that it was a grabbing brake rather than an evil spirit that caused us to part company with the road. Without delay we lifted our car back on the road and pressed on regardless.

At about the rally's mid-point were the Straits of Mackinaw. At the time the "Big Mac" bridge had not been built and the competitors had to take a ferry boat across in the middle of the leg. Missing the boat was counted as "dead time" and teams lost an enormous number of points while waiting for the next trip. Bob and I had a partner in crime waiting with a cabin cruiser near the port in case we were

late for the ferry. The plan was to lift the Isetta onto the deck of the cruiser and cross the straits in style, probably beating the ferry. We were on schedule however and didn't have to use it.

Soon we arrived in Brevort in the Upper Peninsula where there was a three hour layover to catch a rest and short snooze. Bob and I were so exhausted we forgot to gas up. When we were roused at 3AM and having a bit of breakfast, it dawned on us there probably wouldn't be a gas station open at this hour. We explained our problem to the café owner who told us to go a mile back down the road where there was a station owned by his son-in-law. He told us the fellow lived in a trailer behind the pumps and to wake him up by pounding on the door. He came to the door in his bathrobe and grunted a lot. We purchased a couple of gallons which at that time was 25 cents a gallon. It then dawned on us that we would need another fill up along the lonely highway traversing the UP and decided to buy a 5 gallon can of gas which we put on the luggage rack replacing the spare tire. This permitted us to fuel while traveling. The non-driver at the time would lower the back portion of the top, hang out and pour fuel into the tank as we sped along.



The spare tire roped to the luggage rack was eventually replaced by a 5 gallon gas can so the co-pilot could hang out and refuel at speed.

Just north of Elkhart Lake, Bob getting groggy decided to test the engine's flexibility by shifting down to first at 50 mph in a corner. This proved most disconcerting since under such conditions the

Epilogue: Since the story has had wide circulation, I am often asked what happened to that Isetta. Broadway Buick lent it to another driver, Ed McCabe, who raced it at the Indoor Road Races at Chicago's International Amphitheater. Unfortunately he destroyed the car when he collided with a cement pillar. Ed was not hurt and eventually went on to compete in the Paris Dakar Rallye and wrote a book about it.

clutch tended to separate into two distinct pieces impeding further motion. It was really a mess and our spare clutch was useless.

By the time we were forced to retire the Isetta had completed over 1000 miles of flat out driving and the engine was still hitting on all one. We later learned from the score keepers that we had been running 6th in a field of approximately 100.

After hitch-hiking to Road America at Elkhart Lake, a stop on the rally route for some special timed events, I met some old friends with a Mercedes Benz 300SL gullwing. Tony De Ceanne and Bo Clausen were pretty far out of the running so I told them of our plight and asked if they would tow the "tiny" Isetta the 150 miles to the finish down in Waukegan, Illinois. They asked if I had a tow cable and I replied, "Yeah!" It was a five to six foot stranded wire cable. We hooked it up and took off.

The first thing that happened was that the cable cut the brake lite wire on the Mercedes so I couldn't tell when they were putting the brakes on. On the way down to Chicago, the guys in the Mercedes seemed to forget that we were behind them in tow. Bo said he was driving along at over 100 mph, looked in the mirror and saw two sets of terrified eyes looking back at him. At the wheel of the Isetta, all I could do was keep it on line, no small task, and visualize the tiny size of the brakes. Bo gave out a gasp when Tony verified the 100 mph speed but instantly realized that he couldn't jam on the brakes of the 300 SL or we'd just bounce right over them. We took some time in bring the cars back to a reasonable speed.

Stopping at a phone booth to phone the finish letting them know we were all OK and on the way in, we looked at the cars and began laughing because neither of them had a standard door. When we got back to the finish at Hank's in Waukegan both teams received special awards. Looking back on it these many years later it seems a foolhardy adventure but none of us intended to set a speed record or take part in such a dangerous activity... **It just happened!**