



## Message from EMPA President, Dino Oberto

*EMPA is an organization of professional writers, broadcasters, announcers, videographers, and photographers working in the motorsports industry, along with Associate and Corporate members.*

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I hope that this newsletter finds you all well and yes it's been a while since we sent anything out so we have plenty to catch up on.

First of all it's great to be able to get back to some normalcy with life in general. As far as our world of racing there has been no shortage of good motorsports to cover and report on.

It's taken some time but I'm happy to report we've been able to get most of our 2020 award winners their deserving hardware.

After we visited Georgetown Speedway in March the next set of EMPA statues got handed out to Richie Evans Northeast Asphalt Driver of the Year Matt Hirschman and EMPA Jim Hunter co-Writer of the Year Carol Houssock at the season opening race in April at Mahoning Valley Speedway.

We also had the opportunity to present Port Royal Speedway in mid-May with the Chris Economaki Newsmaker of the Year Award which was accepted by the Port's Steve O'Neal and shown live on DIRTvision TV!

And at the recent NASCAR weekend at Pocono Raceway and with special thanks to Kevin Heaney, Kyle Larson was handed his Al Holbert National Driver of the Year. Likewise Ron Drager, president of ARCA, picked up the John and Mildred Marcum EMPA Hall of Fame statue.

Even though the presentations were not done in our usual formal setting, it was instead nice to be able to hand out the statues at a track setting and get some great publicity for the organization in the process.

We still have to disperse with one of two more and will do so as timing allows.



[www.empaonline.org](http://www.empaonline.org)



**2020 EMPA Al Holbert National Driver of the Year winner Kyle Larson** picked up his statue during NASCAR weekend at Pocono Raceway. EMPA member Jim Smith made the presentation to Larson in the Media Center. (Jim Smith submitted photo)





Ron Drager accepting the **John and Mildred Marcum Hall of Fame** award from EMPA president Dino Oberto at Pocono Raceway. Drager is the grandson of the Marcums and longtime supporter of the organization. Also on hand was Brandon Igdalsky (L), Managing Director Touring & Weekly Series, NASCAR and former head at Pocono Raceway. (Photo by Rich Corbett)

Steve O'Neal, **Port Royal Speedway** race director, is presented the EMPA **Chris Economaki Newsmaker of the Year** Award from EMPA board member Jeff Gromis. (R & J Photo)



During the season opening race at Mahoning Valley Speedway **Carol Houssock** and **Matt Hirschman** received their EMPA awards for the **Jim Hunter Writer of the Year** and **Richie Evans Northeast Asphalt Driver of the Year**. Carol is the co-recipient with Jeremy Elliott. Making the presentation is Dino Oberto. (Photo by Duane Canfield)

**In the News**

**From Earl Krause**

"Press Room Pam" Krause continues to "make up lost laps" after being hospitalized last year with **Guillain-Barre syndrome**. Pam's outpatient physical therapy is completed, and she is now doing PT at home and getting stronger every day! She and her husband, EMPA vice-president Earl, thank everyone for their prayers and concern.

"My recovery is proof that prayer and positive thinking make all of the difference!" said Pam, who looks forward to resuming her "press room" duties at the EMPA Convention and Len Sammons' Indoor Racing events this winter!

**NOTE:** We got to see Pam at Pocono and see looks great. Glad all that is behind you and you're doing well.





**From Ron Hedger  
LOST SPEEDWAYS PROGRAM RETURNS FOR 2021**

After a year's hiatus due to the Covid pandemic, the always popular Lost Speedways program returns to the Saratoga Automobile Museum on November 27, 2021, its traditional "first Saturday after Thanksgiving" date.

The program will feature a varied slate of presentations, starting with the always well received "Motorcycle Guy," Mark Supley, discussing the Wall of Death steel cage motorcycle attractions seen at fairs and carnivals. He will be followed by longtime racer Dick Hansen, who has discovered a trove of vintage programs

from the old Rhinebeck Speedway and put together a talk about the end of the midget days and the introduction of stock car racing to the mid-Hudson Valley fairgrounds.

Following intermission, historian and inveterate collector Ken Parrotte will return with a wide assortment of vintage racing photos and the stories behind them. Closing out the program will be event organizer Ron Hedger's traditional interview session, which for 2021 will be devoted to memories of the late DIRT superstar Jack Johnson.

"It's a work in progress but so far, Jack's son Ronnie and longtime friend and crew member Joe Bellomo have agreed to go back in time and talk about 'Jumpin' Jack's' career," said Hedger. "By November, I expect to have others who were involved with Jack Johnson on hand to help relive his glory days."

It is expected that Carole and Alton Palmer's #12A modified that was Jack's last ride will return to the museum for the winter and attendees are encouraged to bring their Jack Johnson photos and memorabilia to share at the pre-talk memorabilia display.

The Saratoga Automobile Museum, located on the Avenue of the Pines in the Saratoga Spa State Park, opens at 10 am. Memorabilia will be on display beginning at 11 am, with the formal presentations set for 12:30 pm. Admission to the program is free for museum members with others paying the standard museum admission fee.

**NOTE:** Ron, thanks for the info and glad to see you guys are back on track at the museum. If anyone is every in the Saratoga area it is an awesome place to visit and highly recommended.

**From J.A. Ackley  
It's Been a Year!**

On April 28, 2020, **Outside Groove** relaunched with a new team behind it, led by motorsports journalists J.A. Ackley and Mike Adaskaveg. In the span of a year, Outside Groove has produced nearly 400 original articles that have been seen by nearly 200,000 unique visitors.

The all-digital media outlet encourages EMPA members to email them, at [info@outsidegroove.com](mailto:info@outsidegroove.com), for submission guidelines and contribute to the effort to reach 500 original articles this summer.

**NOTE:** J.A. pretty cool happenings there with you guys and we certainly hope our membership will reach out with submissions.

**From Peter "Crackers" Reynolds**

I'm on Instagram as crackers73. Install the app to follow my photos and videos. [https://www.instagram.com/invites/contact/?i=2robac063zpi&utm\\_content=2aa030b](https://www.instagram.com/invites/contact/?i=2robac063zpi&utm_content=2aa030b)

**NOTE:** Thanks Crackers and we'll be sure to check it out

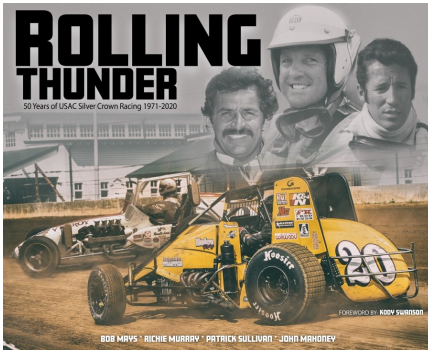
**From Dick Berggren and Jim Donnelly**

We're sorry to report this but Robin, the longtime associate editor of Stock Car Racing and Open Wheel, longtime EMPA member and multiple EMPA award winner passed away early this morning in Amesbury, Massachusetts.

He had been suffering from complications relating to brain cancer. I believe he was 68 but I'm not certain. There is no immediate service but a celebration of his life will be held at a future date.

**NOTE:** Our sincere condolences on the passing of Robin who was a great asset to our sport and the organization.





**From Joe Jennings**

Here's a great book review done by Joe on the 50-year history of USAC Silver Crown racing.

**NOTE:** Joe, thanks for sending along and your insight on the book was excellent!

*ROLLING THUNDER*, USAC Silver Crown history – 50 years – 1971 – 2020

*Rolling Thunder*, 50 years of USAC Silver Crown Racing 1971-2020, is a labor of love endeavor by four knowledgeable reporters; namely, skilled writers Pat Sullivan and USAC's Richie Murray and noted photographers John Mahoney and Bob Mays.

And based on previous products by this quartet, this book will also be a winner.

As presented, the 350-page book reminds one of a fulfilling seven-course meal, which leads off with the appetizer, a stimulating Introduction authored by Sullivan, a college professor and acclaimed writer and track announcer. He warms-up readers with a walkthrough of the 50 years of Silver Crown racing, and he's followed by the soup and salad portion -- a well-written Foreword by Kody Swanson, the winningest driver in the history of the series.

The first two sections of the book are followed by the all-important main course -- the meat and potatoes, so to speak – split into five chapters: The Road of Legends, 1971-1977; Time to Blaze a New Trail, 1978-1997; The Circuit Grows Up, 1998-2005; Into the Depths, 2006-2013 and Out of the Abyss, 2014-2020.

Lastly, the dessert is served with 136 pages of statistics with box scores of every race along with additional data such as list of driver and entrant champions, rookies of year, all-time victories and more.

Over the last half of century, the series has experienced its ups and downs, going from being an integral part of the National Championship Trail to being dropped as advanced technology of race cars took over along with the growth of larger venues and the influence of sponsorship dollars and television exposure.

Also, the number of mile-dirt tracks, the bread-and-butter playgrounds for the series, was dwindling rapidly. In 1971, four dirt-tracks had survived and two years later, just three remained and today, two are still active.

These conditions didn't bode well for the once-popular series, particularly after fan-favorite drivers such as A. J. Foyt, Mario Andretti and Al Unser, Sr. had other priorities on their schedules.

Regardless, the series stayed in business and when half-mile dirt tracks and pavement races were added to the schedule, interest was seemingly renewed. At times, there were more than a dozen races being run after being reduced to three at one point. These situations are described well throughout the book and every year's action is presented along with relevant photographs on every page.

A new generation car gained short-term attention, but the emergence of future stars like Tony Stewart, Ryan Newman, Kasey Kahne and Jeff Gordon pumped new life into the series.

And then along came Jack Hewitt, who became the new poster child. His runs are described in detail as is Swanson's record-breaking rise through the ranks along with a few unique occurrences.

Who can forget the 1981 Pocono 500 when the Silver Crown contingent was called upon to be field fillers for the senior circuit? With 11<sup>th</sup> place, Mark Alderson scored the top finish by the slower class – 18 laps behind Foyt, the race victor. To race at the superspeedway, the Silver Crown cars were required to add a rear-view mirror and the drivers were handicapped by having to exit during the refueling process. But the payoffs were worth the aggravation.

"Rolling Thunder" contains many references to stories and anecdotes from the past, which will either jog a reader's memory or add to one's education about events and accomplishments over the half century of coverage. Not surprisingly, the book is hard to put down once you start reading, and it will make for a welcome addition to a racing library or to display on a coffee table.

As stated at the beginning of the review, the book reflects on the commitment to excellence by the producers and comes off as a big-time winner.

Printed on high-quality paper, "Rolling Thunder" is bargain-priced at \$49.95 + \$9 postage from Fastrack Publishing, 5220 North 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, NE 68521, if paying by check or cash. Credit card purchasers should contact [www.sprintcarstuff.com](http://www.sprintcarstuff.com) or call the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame at 641-842-6176.



**From Jim Donnelly**

I have been appearing on the Legends of Racing Radio Show hosted by Buz McKim, first director of the NASCAR Hall of Fame, which has a Facebook page and is streamed live through there.

I've also done several programs, and will continue to be a regular guest, on the In The Pits radio program, HOME | In the Pits, which is founded and hosted by Larry O'Donohue, who was a good friend of our sadly departed pal Dave Reininger and is a fellow graduate of Bishop Eustace Preparatory School in Pennsauken, New Jersey (he Class of 1969, me Class of 1974).

Buz's show originates Fridays from The North Turn restaurant in Ponce Inlet. In The Pits is based in Myrtle Beach and is broadcast throughout the Carolinas. I did a live feed from the Amelia Island concours last weekend. I'm continuing with Speed Sport, working my own website at <http://www.jimdonnellyonwheels.com>, and we are about to send the second issue of Crankshaft to the printer.

I may have another announcement to make very shortly. Miss you all. Thanks, best, JD.

**NOTE:** Jim, always good stuff coming from you. Thanks!



**Save the date:**

We are tentatively set to hold the 2022 annual convention the weekend of January 14-16. More info will be forthcoming.

Until next time

Peace, out

**Dino**

**EMPA Board of Directors**

President	Dino Oberto	dlmo@ptd.net
Vice President	Earl Krause	earl@aarn.com
Secretary	Carol Houssock	carol2race@aol.com
Treasurer	Jeff Gromis	jg495299@comcast.net
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