



Message from EMPA President, Ron Hedger

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



We hate to open a newsletter with sad news, but for those who have not heard, EMPA Hall of Fame inductee Howie Hodge, 77, passed away three weeks after the ceremony in a hospital near his Connecticut home. Our condolences go out to his wife, Mary, who was also inducted at the NASCAR EMPA Hall of Fame banquet. The “dynamic duo” spent many, many seasons photographing NASCAR events around the Northeast together. Howie’s ready smile and dry wit, not to mention his technical expertise and tips to the next generation of photographers, will be greatly missed by all.

Board of Directors:

Ron Hedger, President
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Len Sammons
Earl Krause
Jeff Gromis, Treasurer

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Carol Houssock, Secretary

A contribution in Howie’s name was made by EMPA to the designated charity: Victory Junction Camp, 4500 Adam’s Way, Randleman, NC 27317. For camp information regarding donations, please call their office at (336) 498-9055.

In this Jim Smith photo (above), John Snyder is presenting Mary and Howie with their Hall of Fame trophy at last month’s EMPA banquet.

Mike Petrucci offered the following regarding his friend Howie Hodge:
I took a lot of road trips with Howie, and sometimes with Mary tagging along. I have learned more about being a good person on those trips than I ever learned about photography. And I hope I can, someday, carry myself with as much compassion as they always have. It is not easy to do in our business, we all know that for sure. But I'm going to always have a little piece of the Hodges with me.

NOTE FROM THE SPALDING FOUNDATION, OUR 2017 CHARITY RAFFLE BENEFICIARY

To: Ron Hedger and members of the EMPA

Thanks to everyone for donating the ticket sales to the foundation. It is very much appreciated and we want to thank Carol Houssock for nominating the foundation.

Sincerely, Betty Sherwood, Director
Spalding Foundation for Injured Drivers, Inc. 1989-2017
bjspald@msn.com www.spaldingfoundation.org

Paul Kelly supplied the RallyCar body panel signed by Tanner Foust, Pam Boas (Tony Stewart’s mom) supplied the ‘Smoke’ items and Kathi Lauterbach of Rahal/Letterman supplied the autographed backpack. Thanks to Joe Kaminski for securing these items!



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LETTER FROM THE WILLIAMSON FAMILY

Dear Ron and EMPA members,

Kurt, Felecia and I would like to say "Thank you" from the bottom of our hearts. It was such an honor to accept the Hall of Fame Award for Kramer. We certainly did enjoy the banquet and chatting and meeting your EMPA members who certainly made us feel very welcome. If only Kramer could have been here with us to accept the award in person. Kramer would have been so excited and honored. I know he was there with us, and I'm betting that trophy that didn't get them on time, well I'm pretty sure it was up in heaven. I think Kramer was showing it off in heaven. Kramer always had a lot of respect for the press and photographers. Those of you who knew Kramer found out that he was a character. He liked to have fun, which meant a lot of crazy pictures. Kramer always believed racing was about all the people involved in the sport and fans not only the drivers. He would always look at the crowds, because he knew you needed fans to keep the tracks open. He was like a little kid when he won a race. He was always looking for his picture in the paper. And he could spot his name in articles before he even read the article.

So I want to say thank you to everyone who not only voted for Kramer but who had the opportunity to meet Kramer and enjoy his personality. Trust me, Kramer is in his glory right now up there in heaven bragging about this awesome trophy that he was just honored with for the EMPA Hall of Fame.

Again thank you again for asking my children and I to accept this award for Kramer. I never in a million years thought Kramer would leave me in a racing accident. He was as strong as an ox. But Kramer left us doing what he loved doing, and we were still having fun. If anyone ever tells you that losing someone gets easier with this, well obviously they don't have the kind of love I had for Kramer because it certainly doesn't get any easier. A lot of people ask me why do I go to the races and isn't it hard. I go because that's what our family did, and it's all Kramer's fans and friends that keep me going. On any given night a fan or fellow competitor will come up and share a story about how they met Kramer or something Kramer did, a funny or crazy story. And yes sometimes I cry but it's a good cry just knowing Kramer touched someone's heart. It's great hearing all the stories about Kramer. Kramer was one of a kind.

So again, Thank you!!!

Sharon, Kurt and Felecia Williamson

MEMBER NEWS

VP Dino Oberto is recovering from a knee replacement operation. His recuperation was extended when the knee retained blood and was extremely swollen, but he is doing much better now that the swelling has subsided. If you want to send Dino a card, he's at 211 Columbus Ave., Hazle Twp, PA 18202.

EMPA treasurer Carol Houssock recently received Chemung Speedrome's "Dedication to Motor Sports Award" at their annual banquet. Carol has been the announcer there all but 1 or 2 years since the track reopened in 2001. Congratulations on the well-deserved honor. Carol also had surgery earlier in the month for repairs to her hip replacement incision.

EMPA DIRECTORY

The (nearly) current membership directory is attached. A few members are still in arrears on their dues but the number shrinks daily and we wanted to get the directory out before everyone got busy with a new racing season.

Members who still owe dues can send their check directly to treasurer Jeff Gromis, who will then pass the names along to me so that membership cards can be sent.

Until next time..... *Ron Hedger*

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