

The Preservationist

The Member Newsletter of the Historic Race Circuits of Elkhart Lake Preservation Society
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HRC Summer Dinner Event

HRC hosted its summer dinner event on July 19th in the theater at Victorian Village in Elkhart Lake. Friendships were renewed and formed among nearly 100 members and guests at the cocktail reception that preceded dinner.

After dinner Ernie Nagamatsu explained the fascinating story of the California bred road-racing hot rod, Old Yeller Mark II Buick Special originally owned and built by Max Balchowsky. Ernie recounted, with

laps before succumbing to transmission failure. Informal reviews by members and guests indicated that the audience found the program to be both educational and informative.



Elaine and Ernie with Old Yeller II in the background.

photos, the 200 mile race at Road America in July of 1960 where Carroll Shelby driving Old Yeller II raced against the likes of Augie Pabst in a Meister Brauser Scarab Mark II Chevrolet and Jim Jeffords in a Maserati Typo 61. Longtail. Although Jeffords went on to win the race, Old Yeller led the race for the first thirty-one



HRC President, Tom Hollfelder with Elaine and Ernie at the Dinner Event.

Special thanks go to Ernie and Elaine for coming to Elkhart Lake. A week before the HRC event Ernie and Old Yeller II were in England at the Goodwood Festival of Speed. He had hoped to drive the car at Road America during the vintage race weekend following the HRC event. Unfortunately, logistics prevented the car from being shipped to Elkhart Lake in time. Ernie and Elaine made the journey from their home in California just to be with us, even without Old Yeller II.

Briggs' Bend

"It was just too dangerous"



The Briggs' Bend historical marker.

Headed west on CTY JP exiting "Pecks Alley" the Historic Circuit makes an oblique right turn followed by a reverse camber plunge sharply downhill making it easily the most difficult turn on the Historic Circuits. Named "Briggs' Bend" uninformed visitors frequently assume that it was named for Briggs Cunningham. It appears not everyone stops to read the maker text and the prominence of Briggs Cunningham in the history of the Elkhart Lake open road races make it a common mistake. In fact, the named locations on the Historic Circuits received their names early in the spring of 1951 before Briggs Cunningham raced in Elkhart Lake and before the 1951 circuit was extended to the "Marsh Turn" because, as John Fitch explained at the 2006 Dedication Ceremony, CTY X (now CTY JP) was just too dangerous.

"Briggs' Bend" was actually named for Stephen A. (Steve) Briggs, the eldest son of Stephen F. Briggs co-founder of Briggs & Stratton and the founder of Outboard Marine where Steve was employed. Steve was an early member of the Chicago Region. He owned both an MG-TC and a Jaguar XK120. He raced the XK120 in the over 1500cc event at the June 1950 races held at the Studebaker proving grounds where he finished 3rd. At



Steve Briggs (left) chats with Fred Stratton (right) at a 1952 Chicago Region meeting.

Elkhart Lake in July of 1950 he raced his MG-TC in the under 1500cc Novice race finishing 8th and his XK120 in the over 1500cc Novice race. It was in the latter event that he failed to negotiate the dangerous reverse camber downhill turn that now bears his name, exited the course passing under a barbed wire fence and was saved from serious injury when the wire was deflected over his head by the windscreen. Despite the mishap, he recovered and managed to finish in 3rd place. Steve raced in Elkhart Lake for the last time in the 1951 Novice race at where he finished 4th overall driving his XK120.

Joan Briggs, Steve's wife, drove their MG-TC in the 1950 Ladies race where she finished 2nd behind Natalie Seaverns in the under 1500cc class. Joan was also in charge of the ladies who handled the timing and scoring for the 1952 Elkhart Lake Races.

Steve Briggs served as chairman of the Region's Social Events Committee in 1952 and in 1954 was a member of the Region's Membership Committee.

Stephen A. Briggs passed away in 1965 at the relatively young age of 52. While he did not have as active a racing career as others for whom locations were named, his 1950 off course excursion assured him of a place, albeit somewhat ignominious, in the sports car racing history of Elkhart Lake.

HRC Fall Dinner Event

The HRC Fall Dinner Event will be held at the historic Siebkens Resort on Thursday, September 13th preceding the Fall Vintage Festival in Elkhart Lake. The guest speaker will be racer, team owner and Lifetime Member of HRC, Peter Cunningham. Peter will describe his highly successful exploits driving a modified all-wheel-drive Acura TLX in the challenging Open Class at the famous Pikes Peak Hill Climbs in 2017 and 2018. Reservation forms will be sent out shortly. We hope to see you there.



Peter Cunningham and the Acura TLX at Pikes Peak

