# The Preservationist

The Member Newsletter of the Elkhart Lake Historic Race Circuits Preservation Society Volume 19 Spring 2013

# The Parallel with Pebble Beach



The 2.1 mile Pebble Beach course used in 1951 through 1956. The 1950 course used the short road shown between corners three and five.

The roar of un-muffled engines, the clash of square toothed gears, the screech of drum brakes and the wild excited cheers of the crowd... The cacophonous sounds of open road sports car racing will forever bond Pebble Beach and Elkhart Lake. While separated by over 2,000 miles, the parallels between the history of sports car racing in Pebble Beach and Elkhart Lake share amazing similarities.

Both races were organized by fledgling SCCA Regions; San Francisco at Pebble Beach and the Chicago/Milwaukee in Elkhart Lake. Both Regions held their first race in 1950; Elkhart Lake in July and Pebble Beach in November. Both held their initial races on shorter interim circuits; 1.7 miles at Pebble Beach and 3.35 miles at Elkhart Lake. Both expanded their circuits the following year; 2.1 miles at Pebble

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Beach and 6.5 miles in Elkhart Lake. Both initial 1950 races were low key regional events and both were later expanded to National Championship events.

Drivers who raced both at Pebble Beach and Elkhart Lake include Jim Kimberly, Fred Wacker, Phil Hill, Sherwood Johnson, Roger

Barlow, Mike Graham, John von Neumann. Bill Spear, Carroll Shelby, Bill Pollack and Irv Robbins. In an amazing coincidence Phil Hill placed first in the shorter Del Monte Handicap race in 1951 and fourth in the longer Pebble Beach Cup came to race. He



Phil Hill behind the wheel of the Alfa Romeo 2900B at Elkhart Lake just five Pebble Beach in 1951.

months later and finished first in the shorter Sheldon Cup race and fourth again in the longer Elkhart lake Cup race.

The Pebble Beach organizers had one huge advantage over Elkhart Lake. While the Elkhart circuits were laid out on public roads regulated by state and county laws, the Pebble Beach circuit was laid on private roads owned by the Del Monte Property Association. State laws like the right of access law that ended racing in Elkhart Lake in 1952

racing in both locations had come to a close, the amazing parallel in the history of the two circuits did not. Just as the open road races in



Spectators crowd Drake Road during the 1951 races. Note the densely wooded nature of the course.

did not apply to racing in Pebble Beach and the races continued for four more years on the Pebble Beach circuits.

Elkhart Lake and the August Motorsports Reunion in Pebble Beach, both lasting tributes to the racers and the cars that started it all.

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While many drivers considered the Elkhart Lake circuits to be dangerous, Pebble Beach was even more dangerous. The track wound through dense forests for most of its distance with large and small trees pressing in close to the road.

Then in 1956 the inevitable happened... Ernie McAfee (no relation to Jack McAfee) lost

control of his Ferrari on the long downhill back stretch near the approach to turn six, somersaulted into the air and struck a large pine tree squarely amid ship. He was killed instantly ending open road racing in Pebble Beach.

Although open road

Elkhart Lake led to the construction of Road America, the Pebble Beach races were shortly followed by the creation of Laguna Seca Raceway, the premier closed road race circuit on the West Coast.

Today both Elkhart Lake and Pebble Beach play host to annual celebrations of vintage motorsports, the July Vintage Festival in

#### 2013 Spring Dinner Social Program Announced

Plan to join us in the historic Siebkens main dining room on Thursday, May 16th prior the SVRA Spring Vintage weekend for the first Preservation Society Dinner Social of 2013.

The program will feature the history of Meadowdale International Raceway, one of the great "ghost tracks" of the 1950's. Meadowdale was a 3.27 mile purpose built European style road racing course located in Carpentersville, Illinois just northwest of Chicago that hosted

motor racing from 1958 until 1968. Its most unique feature was the high banked "Monza Wall" located just before the entry to the main straightaway.

Over its ten year life, Meadowdale hosted both professional and

amateur racing under the auspices of sanctioning bodies that included SCCA, USAC, ARCA and AMA. At its peak it hosted the United States Road Racing Championship, the precursor of CanAm, and a unique "Formula-Libre" race that pitted sports cars, Indy cars and midgets against each other. While the track no longer exists, it lives on in the memories of the many drivers who raced there and the thousands of spectators who basked in the sun while engines roared. Some Preservation Society members actually raced there and others hold many fond memories. Much like HRC, a Meadowdale Preservation Society has been formed dedicated to preserving the track's unique racing history and its former site, now a preserve known as Raceway Woods.

> Plan to join us at the Spring Dinner social where Members of Meadowdale International Raceway Preservation Society will roll back the pages of time and share some of the fascinating history of this great racing venue and the colorful characters who raced

there.

Details will follow in an invitation that will be sent to all HRC members. You can also check the HRC website, <u>www.historicracecircuits.com</u> as the date gets closer.

#### **2013 Membership Renewal**

There appears to be some confusion regarding 2013 membership renewals that we wish to clear up. First, while most members have already submitted their 2013 membership renewals, we have been late in sending out acknowledgments due to late delivery of 2013 membership pins. The pins are now in stock. If you have not already received your pin and acknowledgement it will soon be on its way.

Second, reminder notices were both emailed and snail mailed to our complete distribution list - a kind of a belt and suspenders thing - so the renewal requests unfortunately went to the many members who have paid their 2013 dues. If you are one of the members who have already paid, please ignore the notices. You will receive your acknowledgement and pin shortly. We sincerely apologize for the confusion.

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layout featuring the famous "Monza Wall (upper left).

## 2013 July Dinner Social Schedule

The July dinner-social will be held on

## Wednesday, July 17<sup>th</sup>

Preceding the "Brick" summer vintage race weekend at Road America

Please note the change from the usual Thursday to Wednesday

A program featuring CanAm is being planned Details will follow... Save the date!