

The Preservationist

The Member Newsletter of the Historic Race Circuits of Elkhart Lake Preservation Society
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July Dinner Event Sets New Attendance Record

The July Dinner Event set a new record for attendance with 153 members and guests in attendance. To accommodate the attendance the event was held in the theatre at Victorian Village. The weather failed to cooperate so the outdoor bar was cancelled and viewing of the several Carrera cars on display was limited by the rain.



The pristine Carrera Studebaker of Gerie Bledsoe on display before the rain. Photo by Tim Kemmis

The Victorian Village kitchen served a delicious full course meal featuring braized short ribs that was enjoyed by all.

The program featured a presentation on the history of the Carrera Panamericana, the Mexican open road races that paralleled the open road races held here in Elkhart Lake in the early 1950s. Gerie Bledsoe, publisher of the Carrera News, North-American organizer of the modern Carrera

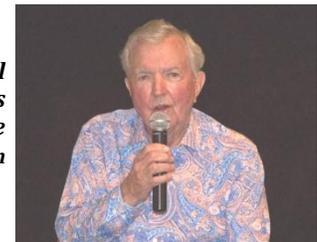
Panamericana and participant for the last sixteen years was the guest speaker.



Gerie Bledsoe presenting the history of the original Carrera Panamericana races that paralleled the open road races in Elkhart Lake. Photo by Tim Kemmis

Herschel McGriff, early day stock car racing legend and the winner of the first Carrera Pan Americana race in 1950 was the Guest of Honor.

Guest of Honor Herschel McGriff answers questions from the audience. Photo by Tim Kemmis



At the conclusion of the program Herschel mingled with the attendees swapping stories at age eighty-seven with a crystal sharp memory that denied his age.

Before Road America

The effort to Keep Road Racing Alive in Elkhart Lake

Prior to the 1952 open road races around Elkhart Lake, Bayard Sheldon promised Governor Kohler that if the races grew to the where public safety could no longer be assured he would ask the Governor to invoke the "right of access" law ending open road racing in Wisconsin. Crowd control problems in the 1952 races convinced Sheldon that the time had come. At the conclusion of the Elkhart Lake Cup Race, he returned to the Elkhart Lake Bank and called Governor Kohler as he had promised he would. In the interest of public safety he said, it was time to bring open road racing in Elkhart Lake to an end.

The Governor, being an astute politician and not wanting to be singled out as the bad guy requested the State Attorney General, Vernon Thompson, to look into the legality of open road racing in Wisconsin. Thompson conferred with State and County officials and rendered his decision, State statutes did forbid closing public roads for private purposes. There seemed to be no way of getting around the ban. Even though plans were already in place for open road races in 1953 they could not legally be held.

The impact of the 1950-52 open road races had an undeniably positive effect on the economy of Elkhart Lake and the

local business leaders were not about to give up without a struggle. State legislators from the Elkhart Lake area introduced a bill in January 1953, which would have permitted County Boards to authorize road races on county roads. A legislative committee held hearing in February where Everett Nametz and other Sheboygan County residents spoke in support of the bill. Nametz said that the September event, "...stretched our summer season, but also benefited all the towns around us and provided business for filling stations, hotels and restaurants along all the highways leading to Elkhart Lake." Also testifying in support of the bill was Wisconsin State Senator Fred E. Nuerenberg, Elkhart Lake Village President Paul Just, Sheboygan Press managing editor Walter Pfister, Plymouth Mayor Phil Anderson, Assistant Sheboygan City Attorney John Hayes, Sheboygan Chamber of Commerce Secretary Matthew Shoak and E. M. Thielke from the Kiel Chamber of Commerce.

Speaking in opposition was the manager of the Wisconsin AAA. He felt that races should be held on race tracks or private courses instead of using highways built with public funds. One serious accident involving Elkhart Lake

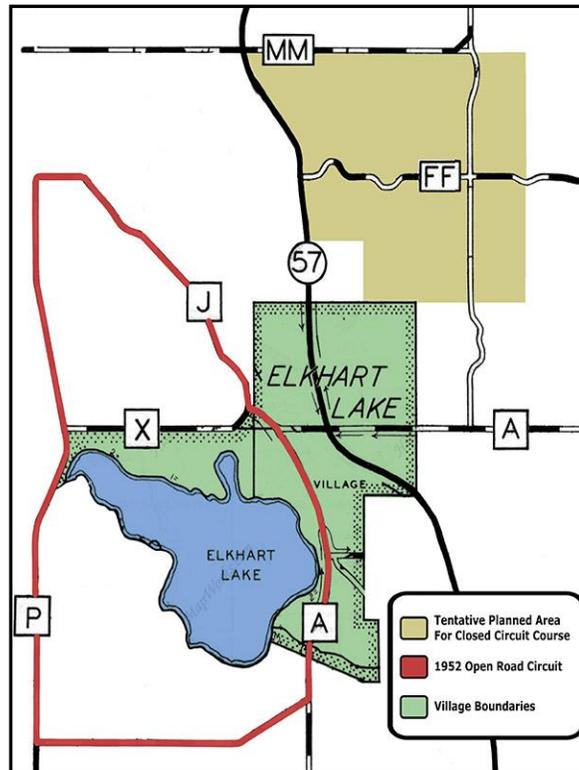
spectators could seriously damage the State's highway safety record that helped attract tourists statewide.

Despite the preponderance of testimony in favor, the deck seemed to have been stacked against open road racing. For three months no action was taken and the bill eventually died in committee without reaching the legislative floor. The last chance for open road sports car racing in Elkhart Lake died along with the bill.

The Elkhart Lake Citizens Race Committee headed by Everett Nametz was simply not willing to give up on the idea of sports car racing in Elkhart Lake. If the races could not be held on a public road then a closed course seemed the only alternative.

The SCCA and the Race Committee probably realized as early as 1951 that racing on public roads could not be sustained indefinitely. Perhaps it was the obvious inherent danger in open road racing or the belief that unhappy citizens like Werner Markwitz would eventually be successful with their

protests. Whatever the reasons, in March, 1952, tentative plans had been developed for a closed circuit course on a 635.3 acre area north of town on the east side of Highway 57 (now Hwy. 67) running from the northern Village boundary to CTH MM.



The area north east of the Village that was under consideration for a closed circuit course in 1953 is shown here in tan.

The closed circuit course the committee had been considering presented many obstacles, the largest of which involved the ability to acquire the needed land. The chosen location was close, very close, to the village, so close in fact that in some areas it would have been in the back yard of some homeowners. Objections to noise and the invading public would have presented a major

headache. Acquiring the land would have required negotiation with many different landowners and much of the land was productive, operating farm land with houses and barns that had been in the same family for generations. Some tentative inquiries were made but it soon became obvious that the property owners would not have been willing to sell their land, except at a premium price and most not at all. By

the middle of 1954 plans to build a closed circuit course north of the Village had died a quiet death.

However, like the Phoenix rising from the ashes, a new and more realistic plan came about through the efforts of Cliff Tufte. Tufte owned the Elkhart Sand and Gravel Company located just south of the Village, a contiguous parcel in excess of 500 acres and he had a plan

for a four mile closed circuit track on the parcel. Emphasis quickly shifted to the Tufte property, funds were raised and on September 11, 1955 Road America held its first races.

Now after sixty years of bringing enjoyment to racers and racing fans alike we celebrate Road America's Sixtieth Anniversary.

Fall Dinner Event Celebrates the First Races at Road America and the Tracks 60th Anniversary

The HRC Fall Dinner Event will take place at Siebkens on Thursday, September



Phil Hill at the wheel of the Tilp sponsored Ferrari 750 Monza.

17th. The program celebrates the 60th anniversary of the first races at Road America. Color film of the first races featuring the incredible duel between



The Cunningham sponsored D-type Jaguar driven by Sherwood Johnson.

Phil Hill in a Ferrari 750 Monza and Sherwood Johnson in a D-type Jaguar will be shown.

The 750 Monza was a significant departure in design for Ferrari reflecting a shift from compact V12 engines in its small class of sports racers to a line of four cylinder double overhead cam engines inspired by the success of the light and reliable 2.5 liter 553 F1 car. The four cylinder cars competed successfully throughout the 1950s. The Monza engine was a 3 liter

design producing 260 bhp. One cylinder displaced 750cc and the car won its first race at Monza in 1954 hence the designation of 750 Monza.

In 1954 a wealthy East coast businessman, George Tilp, acquired and completely rebuilt a 750 Monza, painted the car white and hired Phil Hill to campaign the car.

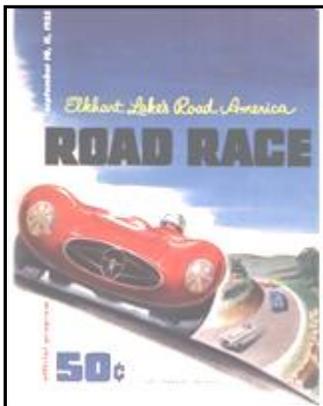
In 1955, after Hill finished first at Beverly and Seafair, Tilp entered the car in the SCCA National Race for classes BM, CM and DM at Road America.

Tilp's and Hill's main competition would come from a D-type Jaguar entered by Briggs Cunningham. The D-type was a sports racer that shared much of its mechanical design with the C-type, including the basic 3.4 liter straight six



XK engine but it featured a unique monocoque style body construction borrowed from the aircraft industry that gave it superior aerodynamics. The car would be driven by team driver Sherwood Johnson who was thought by many to be the best driver on the team.

Dueling throughout the race, Hill lost the lead in the final lap and then regained it to end the race in a photo finish that will long be remembered.



**Plan ahead and be sure to join us
Thursday, September 17th
in the main dining room at Siebkens
for the HRC Fall Dinner Event
celebrating
Road America's 60th Anniversary.**