

# The Preservationist

The Member Newsletter of the Historic Race Circuits of Elkhart Lake Preservation Society  
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## Fred Egloff Headlines Summer Dinner Event

The HRC Summer Dinner Event will be held at Victorian Village on Thursday, July 14<sup>th</sup> concurrent with the *Weathertech International Challenge with Brian Redman*. The Cash bar opens at 5:30 with dinner served at 7:00.

The program will feature historian and author Fred Egloff. Fred became a well-known figure in the Chicago Region SCCA as editor of the National Award winning *Piston Patter*, the region's newsletter. He also served as Midwest correspondent for *Sports Car and Sports Car Graphic*. He knew all the pioneers from the Chicago and Milwaukee Regions: Wacker, Kimberly, Sheldon, Ullrich, Bott, McArthur, Haas, Uihlein, etc., etc. That was primarily because Fred got an early start, working in the pits and on corners when he was a 17-year-old high school student. Fred remembers that "You had to be 21 to race but they would let you work in the pit area and course work stations and sometimes that's just as dangerous."

When he finally turned 21 he purchased his first sports car, an MGA the first to arrive in the Chicago area with help from Wacky Arnolt. He soon had a license and

in the ensuing years raced primarily in the Midwest at State Fair Park in Milwaukee, Wilmot, Lyndale, Blackhawk, Meadowdale and Road America.

While in the army stationed in El Paso, he continued to race. He entered his MGA in the Mexican Carrera San Ignacio, a town-to-town race with virtually no crowd control. Fred recalled, "We started in Jaurez, raced 50 miles to the next town then turned around and raced back. I



*Fred Egloff seated at the wheel of his beloved 1937 BMW 328.*

remember beating Stutz Plaisted (also driving an MGA), in the first leg because he had engine problems. When we got to the layover for the return leg we found that, despite the desert dust, he had removed the air cleaners on his SU carburetors and someone's undershorts had blown up from the road and partially blocked the intakes. After they were removed we beat me on the next leg. The

SCCA learned that some of us had participated in this banned event and had our licenses lifted. Later on I had to go through driver's school all over again to get a national SCCA license."

In the meantime Fred specialized in serious competitive rallying, winning the

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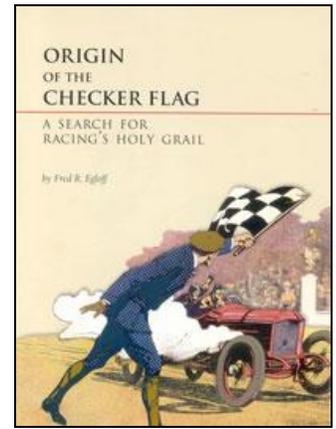
Chicago Region individual championship as well as team championship with his MGA. He became the only three-time winner of the National Lake Michigan Miglia, a 1000-mile national event with over 100 competitors.

By the late '60s as racing became increasingly professional in scope, Fred shifted his focus to "vintage" sports car activities. He was asked to join the VSC (Vintage Sportscar Club), an exclusive club focused primarily on prewar sports cars, made up of road racing pioneers in the Midwestern states. Fred bought a 1937 BMW 328 that had been driven to first place in the 1939 Sports Car Grand Prix of Holland. According to *The Automobile Magazine* of England the 328 BMW was "one of the most significant sports cars of all time" but the car needed some work before it could again see competition

While the 328 was being worked on, he Fred borrowed a LeMans Replica Frazer Nash from Bill Victor. With the Frazer Nash he won the 1970 Competition Trophy of the VSC. He once again won the VAC Competition Trophy in 1997, this time with his 328. In 2008 the historic car was on display in the International Motor Racing Research Center at Watkins Glen, New York.

After a decade of research, Fred's book *Origin of the Checker Flag* was published

in 2006, answering one of racing history's most puzzling questions. In her review of the book Denise McCluggage said it consisted of "impeccable research," and it also received high praise from auto historian Beverly Rae Kimes in her very last review.



Fred is also a noted western historian having received several lifetime achievement awards in that field. Recently his 1981 book *El Paso Lawman: G. W. Campbell* was voted one of the one hundred outstanding nonfiction western books published during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Is it any wonder he has retired to the Texas Hill Country, where his home overlooks the old cattle trail to Dodge City, from where he still stays in touch with friends from the heyday of sports car racing in Chicago.

Fred is a great story teller so be sure to reserve Thursday July 14<sup>th</sup> for what is expected to be a most enjoyable evening.

(Note: Portions of this article were extracted from the book "They Started in MGs" by Carl Goodwin.)

## Spring Dinner Draws Record Attendance

One hundred Forty HRC members and 12th. The program featured the public guest attended the HRC Spring Dinner debut of the biographical book *Augie Pabst, Behind the Wheel*, by Bob

Birmingham. The book documents Augie's fabulous racing career and he was on hand to personally autograph copies. The room seemed to overflow with friends and well wishers and seventy copies of the book were sold and

autographed. The evening was a fitting tribute to an HRC Life Member who contributed so much to the sport of motor racing. (Note: The publisher, Dalton Watson Fine Books, generously donated \$10 to HRC for each book sold.)

## The Less Known Freddie Wacker



Frederick Gland Wacker Jr.

We are all familiar with the racing career of Fred Wacker Jr. but there is much more to know if we are to know the entire man. Freddie's racing career lasted just eight years from 1949 to 1956, only a small part of a nearly eighty year life. This article

attempts to help us see the whole man and some of the parts of that life that made him so unique.

**Military Service** - During WWII he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and was commissioned as a naval aviator and in



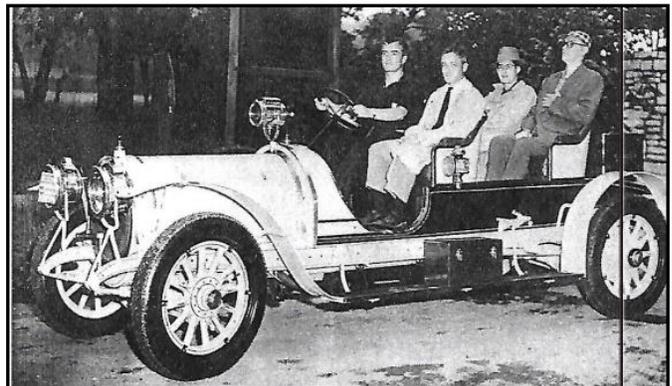
USS Shamrock Bay underway off Okinawa.

1944 was assigned to the USS Shamrock Bay (CVE84), a Casablanca class escort carrier as a senior fighter director officer. The

Shamrock Bay supported the invasions of Luzon, Iwo Jima and Okinawa in 1945.

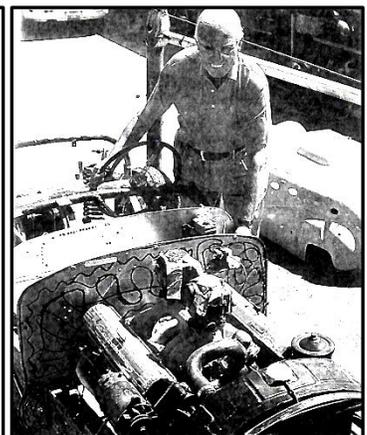
**Other Wheels** -Trained as an engineer, Freddie had an interest in all things on wheels. In addition to his eight year career as a race car driver, he had a

variety of interests in other wheeled vehicles. He owned and regularly drove a vintage chain driven 40 bhp 1911 Delauney-Belleville acquired from Cameron Peck. It was a sister car to one owned by Tsar Nicholas II of Russia.



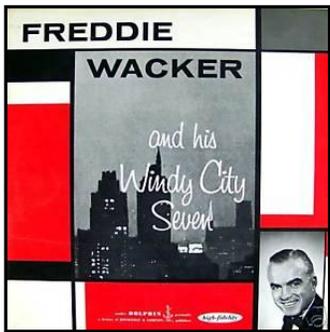
Fred drives his 1911 Delauney-Belleville with passengers Glore, Seaverns and Garroway

He also owned and rode a Yamaha DT-1 Enduro (left below) off-road motorcycles during the '70s and maintained his legendary Cadillac-Allard J2x "8 Ball Special" for many years (right below).



**Musician** – Freddie love jazz music and started his musical avocation playing drums on the Ivy League Circuit while a student at Yale. Out of the navy and back in Chicago he continued as a sideman playing drums with numerous local bands. In 1954 he formed his own bands: First, The Windy City Seven and then Freddie Wacker’s Big Band. Freddie was the drummer for both groups while also serving as band leader and personable master of ceremonies.

The Windy City Seven was an outstanding musical group acclaimed by both sophisticates and jazz aficionados. Their rare repertoire of Chicago style jazz, café society music, Latin tunes and show tunes was played with a spontaneous jazzy enthusiasm. In 1957



*The cover photo is said to be a view of the Chicago skyline from Freddie’s penthouse apartment.*

Street. They received nationwide recognition when they appeared on The group was constantly in demand for society parties and played in nearly all of the jazz clubs in the Chicago land area in the 1950s and ‘60s including The Blue Note Café, the Casino Club and Easy several NBC and CBS television shows including “Monitor”, “Tonight” and “In Town Tonight”.

the group recorded two LP albums on the Neptune Label. Although rare, with a little searching the album can still be found today at prices ranging from \$40 to \$ 150.

His big band added more musicians and played dance music in nearly all of the Chicago land hotel ballrooms and dance venues of the time including the Aragon Ballroom and the Ambassador East Hotel.

**Businessman** –Following the death of his father in May of 1948, he stepped into the role of president in Ammco Tool where he served for 38 years. Ammco Tool manufactured the Ammco line of engine rebuilding and brake service tools including cylinder hones, ridge reamers, boring machines, brake laths and wheel-alignment tools for the automotive industry. The business grew significantly under his direction and Ammco products could be found in most automotive shops around the county.



*Freddie in the North Chicago office of Ammco Tool displaying some of Ammco’s products*

In 1954 Freddie was introduced to George Richards, then the sales manager for the Brodie Meter Company. Richards had devised what he believed to be a superior flow, positive displacement liquid measurement system and obtained a United States patent on his unique concept. Freddie understood the benefit of rapid refueling the system offered from his experience in the Navy and believed the concept had significant potential. He acquired the patent rights to Richard's invention and organized the business as Liquid Controls Corp. After two years of research, development, and testing, the first LC meter produced for sale was a 4", 600 US gallons/minute

aircraft refueling unit sold to the United States Air Force.

From 1955 to 1965, component parts for LC meters were produced in the facilities of Ammco Tool in North Chicago where the machining capacity was available to satisfy developing demand for the unique measurement concept. The growth of both businesses eventually required relocation from North Chicago to a nine acres parcel on Waukegan Road just south of Route 137 two miles west of the old location. In 1966, construction was completed on the new construction was completed on the new facilities and Liquid Controls had its first home of its own including a state of the art flow laboratory. Over the years, the plant and offices on Waukegan Road were expanded four times as the company's manufacturing and assembly operation continued to grow. By the 1980's, there were over 80,000 square feet under roof.

Ammco Tool was sold in 1986 and Liquid Controls was acquired by IDEX Corporation in 2001 after Freddie's death.

**Socialite** – Freddie, who was a bachelor throughout his racing and musical careers, married Jana Comandatore in



April 1958. Jana was an actress and singer under contract to Columbia Studios and Decca records. The Wacker families' prominence in the city and the couples

natural charm and good looks opened the doors to the best social circles and their names were frequently found on the society pages of Chicago's leading newspapers.

Notwithstanding his social prominence and many accomplishments, Freddie exhibited a likable modesty and a touch of the common man. In a 1967 interview, Freddie described himself this way: *"I absolutely consider myself a businessman. I am a businessman who happens to play some squash and golf. I'm a part-time musician and a former international race driver. I like to sail and bowl. If I am a socialite... it is a happenstance of birth".*