

The Preservationist

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C. BAYARD SHELDON

“The Father of the Elkhart Lake Races”

1922 – 2007

A profile by Fred Egloff

C. Bayard Sheldon was born in New York State. Reportedly the “C” stood for Clement. Bayard once said that he was named after the Clement-Bayard motor cars produced by the car company of the same name in the early 1900’s.

He received a superb education graduating from Taft High School in Watertown, Connecticut and then from Yale University. He served as a Navy Officer on a mine sweeper and was eventually posted to Washington, DC. On one of his many flights he met a very attractive stewardess named Sylvia. Originally from Minnesota, she was based in Chicago with United Airlines at the time. Following a short whirl wind romance they were married; Sylvia said that she never even had time to introduce Bayard to her parents before the wedding.

Upon leaving the Navy the Sheldon’s settled in Long Grove, IL. Bayard was employed by Harris Bank and Trust in Chicago where he was the “Fair Haired



C. Bayard Sheldon at the 1950 races in Elkhart Lake.

Boy”. He later started his own consulting business. As part of the business he put together well to do families and their sons with companies that needed cash and leadership. Rather than charge a fee he often took a partial ownership interest in the company, a strategy the eventually made him very wealthy.

Soon after settling in the Chicago area, Bayard developed an interest in the then new British sports cars. At the time sports car magazines were not as common as today (*there was only one issue of Road & Track that year*). However, an early 1948 issue of FORTUNE magazine had an article on British cars featuring a two page picture of an MG-TC. The photo captured Bayard’s imagination and sent him looking for a local MG dealer.

The only dealer in the Chicago area was Joe Neidlinger’s located on Stoney Island Boulevard on the far south side where there were two cars in stock, one grey and the other black. By pure coincidence, when Bayard arrived at the dealership there was

another interested party looking at the two cars. The two men had never met but they took the cars for test drives each worrying that they would not get their preferred color. As it turned out they needn't have worried. Bayard got the grey car that he preferred and the black car went to the other party. His name was Fred Wacker and it became his first "8" ball.



Fred Wacker in his first "8" Ball.

Later that year, Fred organized a dinner party at the Racquet Club at which he proposed forming the Chicago Region of the SCCA. About twenty guests attended and Bayard and Sylvia were among them. Bayard was named the fledgling regions Activities Chairman. He planned and oversaw the early Regional events including gatherings at Whiting's summer home in Lake Geneva, Triers Picnic Grove in Gurnee and a joint event with the Milwaukee Region SCCA at Kopmeyer Farm. The events consisted mostly of maneuverability contests and individual runs against the clock on private dirt roads. The Studebaker Proving Grounds in Indiana with a three mile oval was secured for a multi car speed event but a true sports car open road race remained a dream.

After Jim Kimberly suggested Elkhart Lake as a possible road race location, it became Bayard's job as Activities Chairman to secure the cooperation of the local business leaders.



Bayard with local business leaders (left to right) Bayard Sheldon, Cliff Tuft, James Johnson and fire chief, Ray Kramer.

Bayard was skilled at phrasing a proposal so it sounded like the decision maker had originated the idea and he had little difficulty securing their cooperation. Bayard suggested that the race would help stem the downturn in the local economy and the rich playboy drivers would attract attention helping to put Elkhart Lake on the map. The local business group approved the plan enthusiastically. Everett Namitz, President of the Chamber of Commerce, later said that Bayard's MG was the first sports car anyone could recall seeing in Elkhart Lake.



Bayard with the bow tie and Sylvia to his right with friends and the Sheldon's MG-TC in 1950.

Bayard entered the 1950 races in Elkhart Lake finishing fifth in the Main Event, but he was not known for his racing skills. He became best known for his role as a race organizer. His planning, communication and coordination skills served him best in that capacity and he was General Chairman of the races in both 1950 and 1951. He was recalled as General Chairman again in 1952 when named successors dropped the ball.

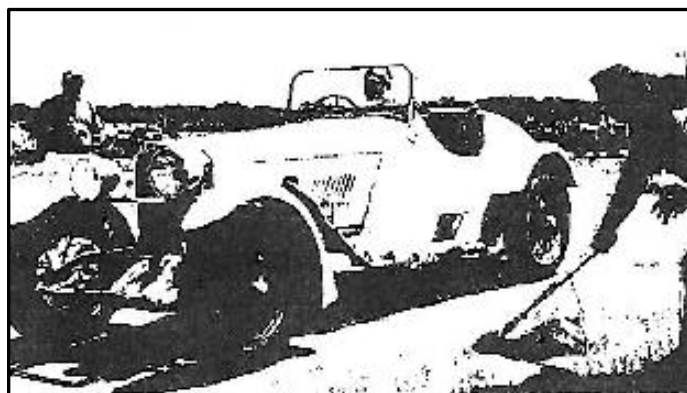
1952 was the last open road race in Elkhart Lake and, unfortunately, Bayard found himself at odds with other members of the Region over the sharing of the profits from parking and program fees. He felt that a greater portion of the profits should have gone to local projects.

Following the races in Elkhart Lake Bayard turned his attention to vintage cars. He became a major collector and knew Bill Harrah, his museum, library and staff in Nevada. Over the years he owned a 1904 Maxwell, a Rolls Royce Silver Ghost balloon car, a 1911 Napier, a 1922 Mercedes Benz Targa Florio, a 1922 Peugeot, a 1927 Mercedes Benz 36/220 Tourer, a 1929 Model "A" Ford Woodie, a 1935 Riley Imp and the "Holy Terror" a custom tourer/racer built on an American LaFrance chassis.



The "Holy Terror" with son Dunston behind the wheel and Bayard in the passenger seat

He was an early member of the exclusive Vintage Sportscar Club (VSC) along with Fred Wacker and Carl Mueller and a regular participant in vintage events and world-wide vintage tours and gatherings.



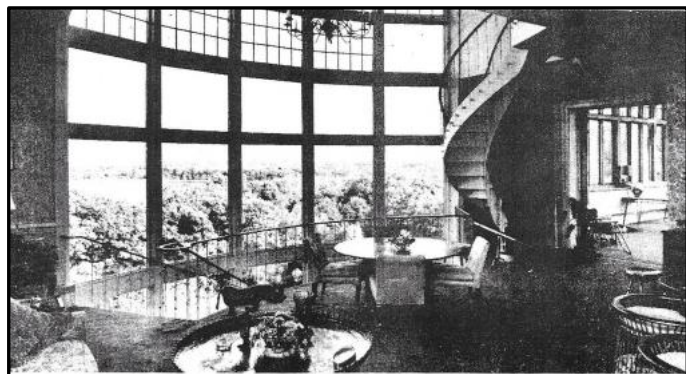
The 1922 Mercedes Benz Targa Florio 1.5 liter at the Wilmot Hills Vintage Grand Prix in 1962. Bayard driving and Bob Schroeder the flag man



The Mercedes Benz 36/220 tourer at the O'Hare race track in Chicago with son Dunston (called Dunny) in the back seat.

The Sheldon's later moved from Long Grove to Spring Grove, IL on the Illinois/Wisconsin border where they built a palatial estate on Pillow Hill. The estate was centered on a three story house that featured a spiral staircase, a view overlooking the Chain O'Lakes and an indoor swimming pool with a bottom that could be raised or lowered. The Pillow Hill estate also contained a separate and complete car restoration facility in which Bayard renovated and maintained his collection. His office was large enough to display several of his cars at the same time.

The estate also had a landing field and hanger where Sylvia hangered her vintage 1930s de Havilland Tiger Moth. Sylvia, a former airline stewardess, loved to fly and was an excellent pilot who regularly competed in the annual transcontinental "Powder Puff Derby".



The view over the lakes with the spiral staircase on the right.

In 1970 participants in the open road races in Elkhart Lake came together to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Elkhart Lake open road races.. In his remarks at the event, Cliff Tufte called Bayard Sheldon "The Father of the Elkhart Lake Races". While Jim Kimberly suggested the location for the races; it was Bayard Sheldon who actually made them happen. Both men had 1952 races named for them.



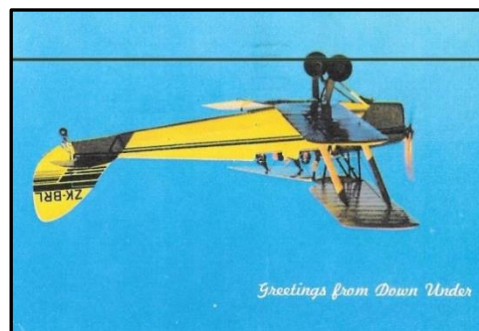
Bayard (left), Fred Wacker (center) and Bill Victor of the Victor Gasket Company (right) at the Twentieth Anniversary Celebration.

In 1972 the Sheldon's brought their 1904 Maxwell to New Zealand for the International Rally. They enjoyed it so much they decided to emigrate. The Sheldon's and their son Dunny settled in Whitianga on the North Island where they had a house overlooking Mercury Bay; the bay where Captain Cook's ship anchored when he claimed the islands for England in 1769.

They remained active in the Kiwi's active car culture and arranged many tours for their American friends.

Sylvia continued to fly her Tiger Moth although no longer in completion.

In 2000, the Sheldon's moved to Hamilton. Bayard passed away there peacefully in his sleep in 2007. Silvia and Dunny still reside in Hamilton.



A greeting card from New Zealand – Sylvia and Bayard in the inverted Tiger Moth"



*Bayard and Sylvia Sheldon
Lives Well Lived*

Portions of Historic Circuits Resurfaced

The resurfacing of a portion of the Historic Race Circuits was completed in August. County Road P from Kimberly's Korner to the Marsh Turn and County Road JP from Ted's Turn to the Hard Right were resurfaced. Resurfacing of

County Road J from the Marsh Turn to the Village is scheduled for 2018.

All work completed appears to be in conformance with the provisions of the 2010 Resource Management Plan.



Resurfacing on CTY P approaching Kimberly's Korner



Resurfaced CTY JP at Briggs Bend

Aston Martin DB4 To Be Featured At HRC Fall Dinner Event

The HRC Fall Dinner Event is scheduled for Thursday, Sept. 14th at historic Seibkens Resort. The cash bar opens at 5:30PM with dinner served at 7:00PM.



The Aston Martin DB4

The guest speaker will be author and Aston Martin aficionado, Richard "Nick" Candee. Nick, the co-author of *The Aston Martin DB4GT*⁽¹⁾, will outline the genesis of the DB4 model from its debut in 1958, its

evolution into the GT model, of which 101 examples were made and into later DB models including the iconic James Bond DB5.

A Milwaukee native, Candee resides in metro Boston but often returns home to his family farm a half hour south of Road America, where he ran his first race in 1982 with his DB5, in the Chicago Historic Races.

(1) The 544 page book is available from Palawan Press, London, www.palawan.co.uk.