



Message from EMPA President, Ron Hedger

EMPA is an organization of professional writers, broadcasters, videographers, photographers and announcers working in the motorsports industry, along with Associate and Corporate members.

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NEW "PEER VOTE" PHOTOGRAPHER'S AWARD

After a great deal of deliberation and planning, the board of directors and the photo contest committee have approved and worked out the details of a new award to honor the memory of the late Howie Hodge, who was inducted into the EMPA Hall of Fame in January, 2017.

We normally would not consider such an action this quickly, just as we wait two years after a driver passes before considering him for induction into the Hall of Fame. We do this to encourage a vote based on facts and accomplishments and not pure emotion. But in this case, member Michael Jaworecki contacted me and offered to sponsor an award in Howie's memory at the same time that other members had approached board member Jeff Gromis about having a photo award based on a vote of the photographers rather than the judges, who they felt offer great technical expertise but have little understanding of the sport itself.

We thank Michael Jaworecki for providing the sponsorship for the new award, which will be a large, engraved trophy that Dave Moulthrop is currently designing. The award in memory of Howie Hodge will be similar to other special awards provided by individuals or organizations. Examples would be the World Racing Group sponsored Jerry Reigle Memorial Award or the Janice Brice Memorial Award provided by Bill Brice in addition to his firm's sponsorship of the photography contest.

After a great deal of consideration, photo chairman Bob Yurko and longtime member Dave Moulthrop have worked out a format where members can submit one photo before the regular contest, with each photo being given a number to be used in voting by the photographers present. The process will be carried out in a separate room, with members submitting their photos anonymously. After the vote by secret ballot, members may retrieve their photos for use in the traditional photography contest.

More details will be forthcoming with the contest rules, which we traditionally run in a late summer newsletter. We thank Michael Jaworecki for his financial support and Bob Yurko and Dave Moulthrop for their efforts on this project.

Michael, who is webmaster at Myracenews.com, offered the following insights when asked about his relationship with Howie Hodge.

"Before I met Howie, I got to know him through his racing site Mod Series Scene. We used to chat on their message board. I'm not sure what year we finally met, but it was a night at Riverhead when the NASCAR Featherlight tour was in town. As I was walking over to say hello to Howie and Mary, he stopped me and asked me to pose for a photo. Little did I know a \$20 bill was hanging out of my pocket and Howie was asking me to pose so another friend could lift the money as a joke.

"Over the years I saw Howie at many races and eventually joined him in the infield, shooting some races myself for the Chrome Horn and then Myracenews.com. Whenever I went to a track I would always look for Howie and Mary to catch up on the latest racing news. As I started submitting to AARN he would call to congratulate me, which was a huge ego boost.

"I have a son, Michael, who is autistic and attended a special needs school in Utica, NY. The trip back and forth from long Island was sometimes as much as 11 or 12 hours. On many occasions, I would call Howie to chat about racing and he helped me make it through those long trips without falling asleep. One of the last times we spoke, Howie called me when Michael was moving home for good. He said it was tradition, a tradition I will dearly miss. With all that said, it is an honor and a privilege to sponsor what I hope becomes a tradition with the EMPA, the Howie Hodge Peer Vote Photography Award."



www.empaonline.org



CONTRIBUTION

EMPA has made a contribution in the name of the late Grandview promoter, Bruce Rogers, to the Checkered Flag Fan Club. Our condolences go out to his family and everyone associated with Grandview, into which Bruce poured his heart and soul for a lifetime.

Older members have fond memories of the many years that Bruce and wife Theresa attended the EMPA convention on behalf of the speedway. Our prime recollection is of myself, Bruce, Ernie Saxton, Marty Gordner and Keith Waltz engaging in a spirited late night discussion in an otherwise empty hospitality room. Strong opinions were exchanged, with everyone respecting the other's thoughts knowing they came from different perspectives. In a nutshell, that is a large part of what the EMPA is all about.

MEMBER NOTES

Bill Channell, who was the heart and soul of our video contest for many years, is suffering health problems again and can't get out to the races anymore. I'm sure he would appreciate notes of encouragement and news from the track. His email address is racevid@earthlink.net.

NEW MEMBER

Welcome to Dan Anderson of Bouton, IA, editor at large for Speedway Illustrated.

NASCAR HALL OF FAME

With the 2017 HoF vote on the horizon just before Memorial Day, please send me any input you have before mid-May. If you have an opinion for or against any of the nominees, we're always glad to consider your viewpoint before voting.

REMINDER

The Honda America Video Contest, now under the guidance of contest chairman Mel Thomas, has categories for all sorts of video work as well as racing related radio shows. Members should plan ahead and preserve their best work for the 2017 contest as well as encourage more media people involved in those activities to join the EMPA. We're all better off with stronger competition and greater involvement.

Questions or suggestions regarding the contest will reach Mel Thomas at melthomas63@gmail.com.

PHOTO GALLERY

EMPA member Greg Zyla regularly visits EMPA's 2012 Junie Donlavey Spirit of the Sport Award winner, Al Robinson, at Elderwood Nursing Facility. Friends gathered last week for Al's surprise birthday party, and Al's award was prominently on display. Al and EMPA Secretary Carol Houssock shared a special moment.

Carol Houssock (L) and Greg Zyla (R) photos



EMPA member, Jim Smith, with Jeffrey Earnhardt and the late Howie Hodge



Paul Stout Photo

Until next time..... *Ron Hedger*

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