



Message from EMPA President, Dino Oberto

Greetings, all -

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

As of this writing I hope, under the current circumstances that our nation and the world is dealing with due to the COVID-19, that you and your loved ones are doing well.

Funny that at this time we would be in full swing with all of racing and have so much to report on but alas we must adhere to the constraints that are in place by federal, state and local government. We need, however, to abide by their requirements in order to best combat this cruel virus and work together to bring back a sense of normalcy.

I feel that we, as members of the auto racing media, are in a unique position during these trying times. Our readership relies on us for good news from mainstream information, which of late has been consumed by the virus and its impact on our lives.

Let's use this time to bring encouragement through motorsports. There has been plenty of nostalgic material in place of current sporting events, and for the most part very uplifting.

Some of you have been doing that as well through social media postings and such. Please continue to bring the good news of racing, sharing your memories during these times, which has become a great outlet until the real racing finally returns.

With that I wish you all to be safe and healthy.

Board of Directors:

- Dino Oberto, President
- Earl Krause, Vice President
- Carol Houssock, Secretary
- Jeff Gromis, Treasurer
- Karl Fredrickson

IN THE NEWS...

From Carol Houssock

March 30th started week 3 of working remotely at my regular job. But I'm also the Board President of Meals on Wheels of Chemung County.

Last Wednesday I recommended that we do a press release and a large mailing to appeal to the community for financial assistance. We have blown our budget and had to cancel our largest fundraiser that nets us roughly \$30,000.

The press release went out that night and, with the support of several other board members, we had the 2,500-piece mailing ready in 24 hours. The Executive Director and I appeared on three TV networks, and several radio stations contacted us for interviews.

People and businesses are responding - money is coming in, and at least two restaurants that opted to close donated fresh vegetables, eggs and other perishable food to us. Our clients will not, now or ever, go without nutritious food they cannot prepare themselves. *Awesome info, Carol, and keep up the great work!*



www.empaonline.org



From Bones Bourcier

Dino, this is just a (belated) note to thank you and everyone connected with EMPA for a wonderful time at the group's recent convention.

As I've mentioned to you in earlier conversations, it had been a long time since my schedule allowed me to attend an EMPA gathering, and I was blown away by the professionalism I saw from start to finish. Particularly impressive were the Friday-night interview sessions with so many of the region's most interesting racers; that was not only a handy opportunity for the writers, broadcasters, and photographers on hand to connect with those racers, but also a chance for the racers themselves – particularly the young ones – to experience the process of group and individual interviews in a relaxed setting. When they face a similar bunch of questioners this season after a successful night, or even a bad one, they'll be a bit more prepared, and that is a good thing.

The Saturday-night awards dinner and EMPA Hall of Fame inductions were terrific, and I was honored to play a small part by helping to induct Kenny Schrader. I know he and Ann had a great time. My congrats to the other inductees, and of course to the winners of EMPA's annual awards.

It was great to reconnect with a lot of familiar faces over the weekend, but I was also encouraged by the number of unfamiliar, young faces on hand. It's always nice to see new people come into the fold, and I know that the things those young folks pick up at gatherings like the EMPA convention will serve them well.

I'm sorry that it took so long for me to pass along my thanks, but it seems as if I've been slammed with deadlines from the minute I got back home to Indianapolis. That's a good news/bad news situation: the bad news is that deadlines sure can be bothersome, but the good news is that writing is the thing I love most, and there are still plenty of projects to complete.

I look forward to seeing you all again soon.

All the best, Bones Bourcier

Bones, on behalf of everyone thanks for the kind words and once again we REALLY appreciated having you with us and hopefully it your next visit won't be so long apart.

From Bob Marlow

Racing Withdrawal

As I write, it was just two weeks ago that I drove to Syracuse for the finale of the 2020 Indoor Auto Racing Championship series. I arrived shortly after the New York State governor issued an order prohibiting all gatherings of 500 or more people, cancelling the event. All I could do was commiserate with my colleagues who had made similar trips, and return home.

Of course, two weeks later we are at a point where a gathering of two or more people is considered risky, we are asked to remain in our homes, and racing events worldwide are on hold or cancelled outright.

On my return drive from Syracuse, I was anticipating watching the NTT Indycar Series opener from St. Petersburg, since at the time it was still a go albeit only as a televised no-spectators event. That soon became a cancellation also, and I was, to coin a phrase, bummed.

It didn't take long for us all to realize that we weren't going to be seeing any live racing of any sort any time soon. Not at our local tracks, not at the major venues, not on television, not online.

Somewhat to my surprise, my bummedness soon turned to comfortable acceptance. Racing's postponements and cancellations are not unique under the circumstances, as everything from major league baseball to weddings have been set aside during this pandemic. Businesses large and small have been ordered to close. The travel and leisure industry has been clobbered. Dinner for two? Take-out only.

The impact on racing professionals cannot be minimized, of course. From speedway staff layoffs to sponsorship contracts lost, the economic ramifications in the racing community compare to those seen in many other industries. And how do we, as racing writers, write about racing when there is no racing? What do our racing photographers photograph?

Very quickly I have seen a shift from race reportage to more feature stories and historical pieces, and I have an appreciation for such writing and a love for vintage photos. But depending on how long it takes for things to get "back to normal," there may be only so many of these stories and photos we can sustain before the audience tires of them and becomes restless for genuine on-track action.

Speaking of genuine on-track action, if there is one segment of the racing world that is benefitting from the pandemic it is the virtual segment. iRacing is surging. But, and I say this without wishing to be a wet blanket, virtual racing doesn't interest me. Racing – actual racing – is a challenge of man and machine, a challenge that has very real consequences. Without the element of death-defying bravery and skill, it is, to paraphrase Hemmingway, only a game.

So... when will we get back to real on-track racing? Weeks? Months? *Years?* None of us knows. But I'm content to wait it out. There are bigger challenges facing us right now.

Great words Bob and thanks for sharing your thoughts.



2021 Convention News

On Saturday, February 29, the Board met to go over some fiscal items and discuss other details on the 2021 convention. As of now we are firming up a weekend date for the 2021 EMPA Convention. It will be back at the Crowne Plaza in King of Prussia and in January. It's just a matter of checking the best available weekend for us. As soon as we get the info we'll pass it along.

We are looking at some ways to keep costs down heading into 2021 and beyond.

We also agreed on new terms for Board members and how each seat will run. This we felt was all for the good of the organization in moving forward and maintaining stability. If you recall this subject was discussed at the end of our Sunday general meeting at this year's convention.

It was felt and agreed to best serve the organization, now and for the future, we will change each elected person to a 3-year term. This allows for continuity on the Board and best serve the organization overall with the amount of work that goes into each year.

It was established that in 2021 Carol and Karl will be up for re-election.

In 2022 it will be Dino, Earl and Jeff.

The election years will run as 2 spots up, the following year 3 spots, and the following year no spots.

Again this is to insure a more committed term per person in better working on the Board.

We are also looking to revamp our website.

Fall meeting

No date has been set yet but expect the fall meeting to be early October.

2022 Convention

We had some brief talk about our 50th anniversary convention in 2022. I would like to do a big membership push for this special one. We also kicked around some ideas that would make this a must-attend convention, and if anyone has any ideas they would like to see send it our way for review.

Until next time
Peace and out,
Dino

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