



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.

Ron Hedger, President

Dino Oberto, Vice President

Len Sammons

Earl Krause

Dave Moulthrop

Carol Houssock, Secretary

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CONVENTION SPEAKER

I spoke with longtime announcer and TV personality **Mike Joy** in Charlotte and he has agreed to be our keynote speaker for the 2016 convention. He had intended to spend the weekend with us this past January but with the convention so close to New Year's Day, had to decline due to family commitments. We have another national personality on standby, should something come up to affect Mike's schedule, but otherwise Mike will be on hand both to speak and to present the Young Gun Award with business partner John Holland.

CONVENTION INPUT

We continue to receive positive comments about our ongoing efforts to shorten the

Saturday press conference session while encouraging participants to offer "real news" rather than a recap of their past season, a waste of everyone's time. For 2016, we will continue this effort, aided by moderators Dino Oberto and Earl Krause, who have done a great job with the sessions in past years. Remember, it's never too early to encourage sanctioning bodies and speedways you deal with to participate.

On a related note, everyone in the leadership positions has worked hard to shorten the NASCAR Hall of Fame banquet without depriving deserving recipients of their time in the spotlight. For 2016, we will continue this effort, as a number of members have given us ideas on how to cut a bit of time here and there. If

you have an idea to share, please send it along asap for consideration.

FACEBOOK PAGE

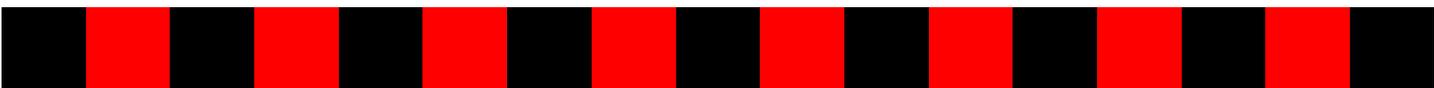
A member recently inquired about the status of the EMPA Facebook page proposed during the January business meeting. This inquiry prompted us to revisit the topic with the officers and board members to discuss whether we need a Facebook presence at this time.

HALL OF FAME VOTING

Another NASCAR Hall of Fame vote is in the books after a great deal of pre-voting discussion and debate. Members have certainly heard that the Class of 2016 will include track owner **O. Bruton Smith** and



Mike Joy Photo: FOX Sports



drivers **Curtis Turner**, **Terry Labonte**, **Jerry Cook** and **Bobby Isaac**, great choices all. The Landmark Award went to Darlington and Rockingham builder Harold Brasington, though EMPA friend and supporter Ken Squier was one of the finalists after a vote was held to reduce the initial five nominees to three finalists.

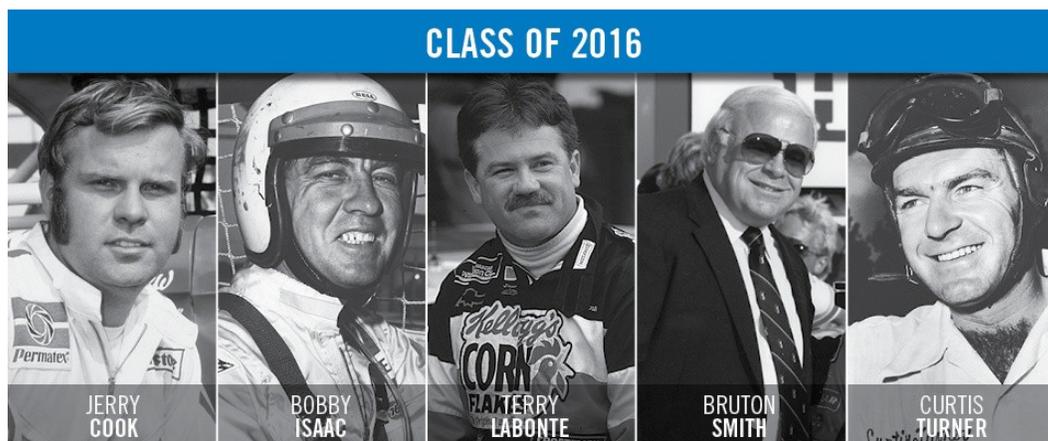


Photo: NASCAR Hall of Fame

We promised in the last newsletter to inform members how the EMPA HoF votes were cast and we are pleased to report that we voted for all but one of the winners and had the fifth in mind until a late change of heart. We supported Smith, Cook, Turner and Isaac, all very deserving, but, after much thought, cast the fifth vote for NASCAR pioneer Raymond Parks.

We did this even though we did not expect him to win and thought that either Labonte or Benny Parsons would prevail. But we thought it was important that Parks receive enough votes that he will hopefully remain on future ballots with a chance for eventual enshrinement. The argument can be made for nearly all the nominees that NASCAR would not be what it is today had they not been involved, but we have long felt that Parks, whose financial backing and race cars were both crucial to the sanctioning bodies' survival in the early years, is especially deserving.

Short track oriented members will be pleased to know that both Larry Phillips and New Englander Mike Stefanik received a great deal of support and have good prospects for joining Richie Evans and Cook in the Hall of Fame in the future. While not as well known nationally as the other nominees, both have tremendous records in their favor.

Cook's election was not well received by those who called in to the NASCAR shows on Sirius Radio the next day, but fans everywhere need to be reminded that it is the NASCAR Hall of Fame, not just the Sprint Cup Hall of Fame. And it is also a fact that not everyone's favorite driver can be elected right away when 20 are nominated and only five will make the final cut.



Jerry Cook Photo: NASCAR Home Tracks



SHIRTS – TIME TO COMMIT

After our recent inquiry as to interest in EMPA shirts and photo vests, we had a substantial number indicate interest in a polo shirt with a lesser number interested in short or long sleeve denims and photo vests. It was decided that we would post the prices for the various items and solicit firm orders from members. Many thanks to Jeff Gromis for spearheading the project.

If you indicated interest before and gave us your size, please do so again so we know that you still desire items at the indicated prices:

Long sleeve denim w/logo - \$33; XXL \$34

Short sleeve denim w/logo - \$23; XXL \$24

Polo shirt w/logo – Tan - \$17; XXL \$18

Photo vest w/logo - \$26

Send your order with item, size and a check for the proper amount made out to Eastern Motorsport Press Association - 20 Everson Way, Ballston Spa, NY 12020. Deadline – June 20.

LAPSED MEMBERS

Some 26 members have not renewed for 2015. They will no longer receive the newsletter and their names have been removed from the database which supplies the mailing list used to send the award ballot, convention info and renewal form each November.

A few have responded to our two reminders, advising that they no longer cover motorsports. But a substantial number have told us they intend to renew but have yet to do so. We would ask everyone to remind anyone you hear complain about being dropped that they had two reminders and were six months overdue.

Hopefully these valued members will rejoin and participate in future conventions and contests. Our strength has long been the diversity and dedication of our membership and our goal is to re-enroll the lapsed members while continuing to enlist writers, photographers and videographers from all levels of the sport to continue our long standing tradition of members helping each other become better at their craft.

NEW MEMBER

Welcome to former member Bruce Walls of the American Kart Racing Association. His return is especially notable, as a few years ago he contracted Hepatitis-C from a blood transfusion, became extremely ill and was near death when a donor liver finally became available. He is now strong enough to return to work and we are very pleased to welcome him back to the EMPA.

AND FINALLY...

Just another reminder to be thinking about our own **Hall of Fame** candidates for 2016 induction. Send your suggestions (with background info on the nominee) to: Area Auto Racing News, ATTN: Earl Krause, 2829 South Broad St., Trenton, NJ 08610. No e-mail nominations, please.

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

Keep reading....on page 4!



I'm adding this to Ron's newsletter:

2014 AARWBA CONTEST WINNERS

A number of EMPA members scored in the American Auto Racing Writers and Broadcaster Association contest. Congratulations to all! Carol Houssock

NEWSPAPER NEWS WRITING: 3. Ron Hedger, "Friesen Wins Thriller," Schenectady Daily Gazette

MAGAZINE FEATURE WRITING: Honorable Mention: Ron Hedger, "The Race Between Races," Speed Sport

MAGAZINE COLUMN WRITING: 1. Jim Donnelly, "The Good Earth," Hemmings Classic Car

MAGAZINE TECHNICAL WRITING: Honorable Mention: Bruce A. Bennett, "Swayin' in the Wind," Speedway Illustrated

ONLINE NEWS WRITING: 2. Ron Hedger, "Hearn Steals Sixth Moody Mile 358 Trophy," National speedsportnews.com

PHOTOGRAPHY PRINT ACTION: 3. Bruce A. Bennett, "Flirtin' With Dirt," Speedway Illustrated

PHOTOGRAPHY-PRINT PEOPLE: 2. David Moulthrop, "Showers of Victory," Speed Sport
Honorable Mention: Bruce A. Bennett, "Back in Black," Speedway Illustrated

PHOTOGRAPHY-ONLINE ACTION: 3. Bruce A. Bennett, "Hamlin Pits at Pocono," Nationalspeedsportnews.com

PHOTOGRAPHY-ONLINE PEOPLE: 1. David Moulthrop, "A Champion's Cheer," Nationalspeedsportnews.com



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