



Message from EMPA President, Dino Oberto

Greetings everyone

I hope that this newsletter finds you all well. It's great to see the country is making headway on fighting the coronavirus and slow but sure we are all getting back to some normalcy.

For some of us it's been a nice feeling to get in some early season events and I know that for the rest we will all be back in the swing in short order. In the meantime please stay safe.

With that we have some *"In the News"* items to pass along.

Good friend of EMPA Brett Deyo was gracious in allowing us to hand out some of our 2020 award hardware at his very successful Bob Hilbert Sportswear Short Track Super Series Fueled by Sunoco Velocita-USA opener at Delaware's Georgetown Speedway on Saturday, March 13th, prior to the start of that evening's Melvin L. Joseph Memorial.

Stewart Friesen picked up his Richie Evans Memorial EMPA Northeast Dirt Driver of the Year statue. This marked the fourth time for Friesen winning the award and tying him with Fred Rahmer for most times accepting the honor.

Dino (L) and Stewart, photo by Bob Yurko



The gang from **DirtrackTV.com** gathered to receive the Chis Economaki Memorial EMPA Newsmaker of the Year statue award.

L to R: AJ Thomas, Mel Thomas, Dino, Matt Thomas, Mike Mallett, Art Rorick, Rusty Rhodes. Photo by Bob Yurko



16-year old **Alex Yankowski** was all smiles when he was handed the New England Race Fuels John Blewett III Memorial EMPA Young Gun Award.

Dino with Alex, photo by Bob Yurko



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

Board of Directors:

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



www.empaonline.org



Also, **Rick Sweeten** was clearly moved when presented his Ace Lane Sr. Memorial EMPA Photographer of the Year statue, a distinction he well deserved.

Bob Yurko (L) congratulating Rick. Photo by Eric Storch



And, a very humbled **Pete MacDonald** collected his Brice's NAPA Auto Parts EMPA Photo Contest plaques that included Portfolio of the Year *and* Best of Show.

L to R: Jeff Gromis, Pete McDonald, Bob Yurko, Rick Sweeten, Dino Oberto.

Photo by Eric Storch

Although it was not exactly a customary banquet setting, the awards presentation took place in front of a packed grandstand of fans, and with many of our members on hand too. It was a great way to showcase to everyone the excellence of our organization.

As for the remaining award statues, going to Matt Hirschman - Richie Evans Northeast Asphalt Driver of the Year, Carol Houssock and Jeremy Elliot - Jim Hunter Memorial EMPA Writer(s) of the year, Port Royal Speedway - EMPA Promotional Effort of the Year, and Kyle Larson - Al Holbert Memorial National EMPA Driver of the Year, they will receive their awards in the very near future.

A big thanks also goes to Jeff Gromis in helping coordinate the event.

There's a great piece, penned by NASCAR's Cara Cooper, that was run in April of last year on our own **Ernie Saxton** and his amazing run of 53 years as the "Voice" and PR of NASCAR-sanctioned Grandview Speedway in Bechtelsville, Pa. It's a nice read on his career on the man who is most responsible for putting EMPA on the map. Copy and paste this lengthy link in your browser:
<https://hometracks.nascar.com/2020/04/24/we-sort-of-grew-together-ernie-saxton-set-to-begin-his-53rd-year-grandview-speedway/>

Welcome aboard to **new members**: **Ken Bruce** works with DirtTrackDigest.com and does PR at Big Diamond Speedway in Minersville, Pa.; and **Tom Morris**, who hails from Massachusetts, and is a photographer with Myracenews.com.

A big shout out Happy Anniversary to **Robin and Tom Ervin**, provided pictured at right, on recently celebrating their 18th wedding anniversary!



We would like to extend a very happy retirement to a pair of EMPA members. On March 31st **Jim Smith** clocked in for his last day at work. He begins his next life phase by relocating from New Jersey to Rochester, NY sometime in mid-April. Jim will be giving up his weekend post as official track photographer at Wall Township Speedway in Wall, NJ but plans to stay close to the sport with a number of coals in the fire associated with the sport when he takes up his new residence.

Likewise, a very happy retirement to our hardworking Board of Director and recording secretary **Carol Houssock**. A grant writer/administrator for non-profits, Carol is also the longtime voice/PR person of Chemung Speedrome. She will continue her weekly announcing duties, as well as her Presidency of Meals on Wheels of Chemung County. But she is also currently working on a project that will feature articles written by her and another EMPA member on human interest and other stories behind local racers. They'll be releasing more information soon!



Jim Donnelly has joined the staff of Speed Sport News as a contributor and has had several articles published already. Jim is also now senior editor of Crankshaft <http://www.crankshaftmagazine.com> which has now published its first issue. This is a premium-quality quarterly journal on the history of automobiles and motorsport. They have at least one in-depth article on racing history, or a feature on a historically significant racing car, in each issue. You can also access the website from this address www.lentinello.com

Member **Jim “JK” Kelly**, formerly of VP Racing Fuels and author of FUELIN’ AROUND and other novels, has just completed a fictional thriller titled DEADLY DRIVER. Think Jason Bourne meets Ford vs. Ferrari. It’s about an American F1 driver who has been compromised by the CIA and is forced to do their dirty work while trying to win a championship. Advance review copies are available for EMPA members interested in giving it a read and a review. Release is set for early June. If you’d like to request a copy please email JK directly at jkkellybooks@gmail.com



Motorsports publisher **Coastal 181** is pleased to announce the February 1, 2021 release of its most recent title, “500 ON (THE INDY) 500: Tales, Facts and Figures on ‘The Greatest Race in the World.’” Penned by respected racing journalist Rick Shaffer, with a Foreword by Helio Castroneves, the book approaches the 500 from a different standpoint from other publications. Rather than a flowing story, it is a lively chronological compilation of little-known facts and rare photography, uncovering the true soul of this incredibly enduring event.

Shaffer explains, “I have read enough 500 histories and driver biographies to know what would be considered common knowledge. My inspiration was typical newspaper coverage of a sporting event, with a notebook featuring items that would not be in the main story but still possess interest for the reader. In a sense this book is a gigantic reporter’s notebook on 500 history, with an individual report on each race but with three to seven additional and unusual items for each of the 104 500s run to date. Some items are humorous, some tragic, and some simply unbelievable.”

The 280 pages are awash with nearly 200 B&W and color photos, some never published before, sourced from across the country as well as deep into the Indy Museum’s archives. The book is a captivating read for either the casual race fan or the diehard Brickyard aficionado.

“500 on (the Indy) 500” is the third title with an Indy connection to be published by Coastal 181 in recent years. “Gentlemen, Start Your Engines,” the famous volume written by Wilbur Shaw in the mid-1950s, was revised and updated by Bob Gates with Coastal 181 in 2018. In 2012, the company launched the very popular “As a Matter of Fact, I AM Parnelli Jones,” by Parnelli Jones with Bones Bourcier.

“500 on (the Indy) 500” is available in a hard-cover, coffee-table format for \$39.95 plus \$6.00 S&H by ordering online at www.coastal181.com or by calling Coastal 181 at 877-907-8181 toll free.

The next NASCAR race weekend at **Dover International Speedway** is scheduled for May 14-16. But it’s the race to get Delaware residents vaccinated against COVID-19 that kept the Speedway parking lot abuzz and full since the outset of vaccinating began there on Sunday, Feb. 21. Federal and state staff have been eagerly serving vaccine recipients grateful for the lifesaving shot. Together, it has created a recipe for goodwill, while generating an invitation for good karma.

“Dover International Speedway is pleased to have hosted this vaccination event,” said Mike Tatoian, Dover International Speedway President and CEO. “We know how much COVID-19 has impacted this community, and the nation as a whole, and it is crucial that we all do our part to boost our public health numbers.” We thank all of the personnel who managed and executed the drive-thru lines carefully, efficiently and in a very friendly manner throughout this process. The collaboration and coordination that took place between the various agencies is a model that should be emulated throughout our country – it was simply impressive!”

Photo by Dino Oberto





Likewise, **Pocono Raceway** will also serve as an official mass vaccination site. Lehigh Valley Health Network announced Pocono Raceway will serve as their Monroe County, Pa., COVID-19 mass vaccination site starting at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, March 20, 2021.

“We are proud and humbled at the request to serve as a vaccination site,” said Pocono Raceway CEO, Nick Igdalsky. “Our partners at Lehigh Valley Health Network have done an incredible job during the pandemic and are an invaluable asset in our local community. Our staff is ready to support their vaccination efforts.”

Until next time,
Peace and out, Dino

EMPA Board of Directors

President	Dino Oberto	dlmo@ptd.net
Vice President	Earl Krause	earl@aarn.com
Secretary	Carol Houssock	carol2race@aol.com
Treasurer	Jeff Gromis	jig495299@comcast.net
Member	Karl Fredrickson	kfredrickson@speedwayillustrated.com

