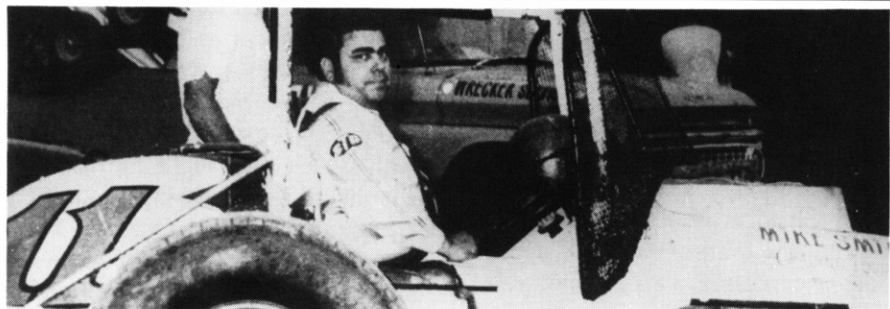


NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

DICK GAINES

Dick Gaines, the country boy from Floyd's Knob, Indiana, started racing in April of 1949 in Carlisle (Ind.). He was 16 years old and drove a 1939 Ford sedan two-seater that didn't have any shocks. Dick was knocked off of the south central Indiana tracks a time or two by the oldtimers as they didn't want a younster beating them. During the early years Dick turned over and crashed a lot in the stock cars. As Dick says, "I would say I had about ten years of 'rough and tumble' racing before I became a good racer."

The thick-chested, dark eyebrowed Gaines came into his own in the 1960's, by racing super modifieds



Dick Gaines
Bruce Craig Collection

and winning at Indiana bullrings like Bloomington, Paragon, Lawrenceburg and Haubstadt. He drove to a lot of wins in 1961-62 before hooking up with E.M. "Dizz" Wilson and his car #70. 1963-65 were banner years for the team as they were just about unbeatable. In fact, it has been calculated that the Wilson/Gaines combo won an incredible 164 races in the

five years that they were paired together. Not only could the team win on dirt, but Gaines and Wilson won major races on pavement at Atlanta and Nashville that made everyone take notice. According to Wilson, "I think Dick's one of the best seat-of-the-pants drivers that ever lived."

According to journalist Robin Miller, "Those were the days of open-faced helmets, knobby tires and hand-made cars. There weren't any roll cages, arm restraints or power steering units. It usually boiled down to man-against-man, and few sized up to Gaines."

In 1970, Dick started driving for Karl Kinser in the Kinser Brothers Racing

Team #22 machine. Kinser, who had Larry Miller drive for him from 1965 to 1969, built a new car for Gaines about every year or so during their eight-year-association. They raced all over the midwest and south with the #22 and #11 sprinters and they won their share of races. As a team, Gaines, Kinser and mechanic Paul Elrod won races and titles at places

like Eldora, Salem, Lima, Indianapolis Raceway Park, Kokomo and others. They also won the "Little 500" at Anderson (Ind.) twice, in 1973 and 1976, and the 'Granddaddy of them all', the 1974 Knoxville Nationals, by beating Jan Opperman in the last turn on the last lap to take the coveted victory in front of 11,000 screaming fans. Beaten by inches at the line, Opperman later said: "He suckered me all night. Teased me into usin' too much tire and then outsmarted me on the last corner. He's a racer, a real one."

In 1977, Karl Kinser built a new super-light car. Gaines piloted it to wins in about 75 percent of the features that he drove. Unfortunately, it was also the car in which Dick had the bad wreck in Champaign, Illinois. To this day, though, Dick claims, "It was the best car that I have ever driven in my 35 years of racing."

Dick returned in 1978 to race for friend "Dizz" Wilson, but it wasn't long before he retired from driving altogether. Says Dick of his racing career in which he won over 600 feature races in fifteen different states, "I met a lot of fine people, had a lot of good times, and I just decided to call it a good deal. I've enjoyed every minute of racing as that was my life dream."

According to Karl Kinser, Mitchell, Indiana's, Dick Gaines "will always be one of the world's greatest sprint drivers."