

# NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

## EMORY COLLINS

By Lee O'Brien

Emory "Spunk" Collins rim-rode his way across the dirt tracks of America and Canada for four decades! In so doing, Emory became one of the most successful sprint car drivers the sport has ever known. From 1921-1951, Emory became a dominant force in the sport of sprint car racing, and by so doing, he won the IMCA (International Motor Contest Association) driving championship in 1938, 1946, 1947 and 1948. During Emory's thirty year driving career, he

one of the first IMCA "outlaws" to run the 255 cubic inch Miller/Offenhauser in the Midwest in 1936. Not content with his equipment, Emory worked with Lee Goossen to make improvements on the 318 cubic inch Offenhauser engine and he used it to win the 1938 IMCA driving crown over Gus Schrader and Jimmy Wilburn.

Born in Sibley, Iowa in 1904, Emory's family soon moved to Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada when he was three years of age. At the age of nine, he began to work after school at a garage in Regina. When he was fifteen, he fixed up a Model T and

Fred the credit for the great driver and mechanic he would later become. Having left home at seventeen, Fred made sure Emory did not get into trouble on the road and he developed Emory's racing talents to the fullest. Emory gained much experience driving Duff Dorward's Fronty Ford, which was the old Barber-War-nack Ford that ran in the 1923 Indy "500". Later, Emory earned enough money to purchase his own Frontenac in 1929. By 1929, he had joined Fred Horey, Sig Haugdahl, Gus Schrader, Glenn Heitt and Johnny Gerber as the most dominant "outlaw" drivers in America.

Emory would begin his running battles with Gus Schrader in the 1930's. It can be said that the two battling sprint car legends did more to popularize sprint car racing in America than any other drivers the sport has ever produced. This was only magnified when Jimmy Wilburn entered the battle to form the "Big Three" of the IMCA "outlaw" racing circuit.

After World War II, in which Emory was given a special citation for his work on military aircraft engines, Collins became the elder statesman of the sport. He still drove the best equipment to be found anywhere in the country and his red and black Riverside Tire sponsored Offenhauser No. 7 was the most recognizable sprint car in America. After thirty years in the racing business, Emory and his wife Irene retired from the racing game at the close of the 1951 season. Irene continues to live in LeMars, Iowa, following Emory's death on June 2, 1982. In 1971, Emory Collins was inducted into the IMCA Hall of Fame.



**Emory Collins**  
Bruce Craig Collection

probably raced on more tracks and in front of more people than any other sprint car driver in America. As popular as the Indy "500" drivers of the '20s, '30s and '40s were, it was Emory Collins who took racing to the people of America at hundreds of county and state fair tracks across America and Canada.

As great a driver as Emory Collins had become, he was even more proud of his mechanical expertise, which enabled him to race some of the best running and looking sprint cars in the country. Emory Collins was

won his first race at Semons, Saskatchewan. The following year he took a Chevy race car to the "big" races at Winnipeg and again won. He really impressed IMCA promoter J. Alex Sloan, who saw Emory race that day at Winnipeg. J. Alex Sloan checked Emory's background and learned he was one of Canada's top junior hockey players.

While Emory became a hockey star on ice, he was fast becoming a racing star with the guidance of Fred Horey, the many time IMCA Canadian and American champion. Emory gave

