

Dave Franks Photo



Allan Brown

by Tony Martin

Race fans are likely to be most familiar with the name Allan Brown through Chris Economaki's National Speed Sport News where he's frequently mentioned for the eye-popping number of races he's attended. He is in the top-ten listed by the group www.trackchaser.net. In his career, the Comstock Park, Michigan resident has seen over 3,000 races here and abroad at over 1,181 racetracks but is quick to confess that he is not trying to pile up numbers but is vitally interested in the quality of shows he and his wife, Nancy, attend.

Brown, generally decked-out with his baby blue National Speedway Directory ball cap, works the crowd at the many tracks he visits, answering questions and selling his valuable reference materials. Fans and racers that travel to the races are likely to have a copy of Allan Brown's National Speedway Directory in their glove compartment. The book has kept racers on track since 1975 with its detailed directions to the tracks and other vital information. The useful publication is an outgrowth of the Midwest Auto Racing Guide that friend Larry L. Yard published for the folks in their area in 1972. Beginning in 1980, Allan teamed with Ross and Nanette Ferguson before buying them out.

Brown also produced the National Sprint Car Annual for over nearly two decades before selling it to South Dakota's Doug Johnson. "We started it because there was nothing available that covered all the various sprint car sanctions. It was a lot of fun digging out the stats, and then putting them together in yearbook form so people could have something to refer to," said Brown.

Another Brown-produced volume, "The History of America's Speedways, Past & Present," documents the sport's history so well that no serious fan should be without a copy. Along with the books, he and Nancy operate www.speedwayonline.com, a website that houses much of the same information as the National Speedway Directory.

He saw his first racing event with his dad in the early 1950s at the Berlin Raceway in Marne, Michigan. Growing up in a hotbed for the supermodifieds, he became well acquainted with many of the era's best and followed them to distant battles. The exploits of the Johncock brothers, Gordon and Nolan (referred to as "Nollie" by Allan), Johnny Roberts, and Jimmy Nelson were followed closely by Allan Brown. Just before becoming a member of the U.S. Army, Allan watched Johnny Benson, Sr., win the Oswego (N.Y.) Speedway's International Classic in 1966. Service to his country, however, didn't stop him from getting to the racetracks. "While stationed in New Jersey and New York in 1968, I had the chance to go to 37 races at 25 different tracks in seven states," said Brown.

Brown is much more than a race fan. For years the USA Today newspaper

contacted him for information anytime they included major race coverage and he has been quoted in many of the nation's major newspapers and has appeared frequently on television and radio. If you have a favorite track or one that really gets under your skin, chances are that Allan can quote your reasons nearly verbatim.

He is well versed on the promotional business of speedways and sanctioning bodies across the land and regularly receives phone calls for advice from the sport's movers and shakers.

In their travels, the Browns continue to spend most nights camping in their van. Since their marriage in 1986, Nancy has seen races at well over 500 tracks. Allan and Nancy Brown were both awarded the Stew Reamer Award for their service to the weekly auto racing industry by Racing Promotion Monthly (RPM).

Aside from traveling to events, the Browns spend their time crossing the country to find the remnants and locations of racetracks past to chronicle for research. One time, a few years back, while looking for tracks in southern Ohio, Allan asked the proprietor of the campground at which he was staying where the old Portsmouth Speedway was located. The gentleman replied, "You're standing on it." And sure enough, as their conversation continued, the outline of the popular quarter-mile oval became obvious.

As part of his giving back to the sport, Brown has served as the secretary/treasurer of the Michigan Motorsports Hall of Fame (MMHoF) since 1993 and has served in the same capacity for the Michigan Speedway Promoters Association (MSPA) for five years. The National Sprint Car Hall of Fame & Museum Foundation in Knoxville, Iowa, counts him as an advisory board member and a voter on both the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame (induction committee) and the North American Sprint Car Poll voting panels. He is also the past publisher and editor of the National Late Model Annual.

Never shy with his opinion, Brown feels that in these tough economic times too many tracks are making the mistake of cutting back from weekly schedules and from the number of special events held. One of his biggest concerns is the fact that with the demise of many of the racing newspapers, historians of his ilk depend on track websites for results and that often these pages are deleted at yearend. He is hoping that more facilities will archive these results for posterity.

Historian and media member Allan E. Brown has tirelessly dedicated himself to the sport to which he humbly ascribes himself the title "Race Fan".

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