



Della Rice

Della Desilva Sutherland was born on January 20, 1897, in Nipomo, California, to parents Walter Sylvanus Sutherland and Anna Desilva Willey Sutherland.

Della had five siblings, Walter, John, Daniel, Ethyl and William. Della married Kenneth Waldo Rice in 1916 and they lived in greater Los Angeles. They had two children, Kenneth Waldo Rice, Jr., in 1917, and Fred Walter Rice in 1921. Della and Kenneth became printers, working in different locations in southern California throughout their marriage.

Della founded the twice-a-month *Coast Auto Racing* newspaper on March 1, 1934, with Volume I, Number 1. The eight-page newspaper was printed at the Rices' Newspaper Shop in Montrose, California, and it sold for ten cents per issue, or one dollar for an annual subscription. According to its masthead, it was "Devoted to the Interest of Auto Racing in California". Championship car, "big car", midget car and motorcycle racing in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area were the featured subjects for the paper.

The *Coast Auto Racing* news initially listed Della as just publisher, with Elton W. Grafton as field representative and G.T. Anderson as advertising manager. By the end of 1934, Della was listed as editor and publisher, with Louie Tomei as the assistant editor and advertising manager. Fred Bloberger was listed as (San Francisco) Bay District representative for most of the first year, as the paper expanded its coverage to northern California and its number of pages to ten.

According to its subscription advertisements, the newspaper was "published with the intention of giving Pacific Coast race fans stories about the boys who drive their mounts around the tracks and also the owners and mechanics who labor day and night to make possible these thrilling affairs as seen from the stands."

While Legion Ascot was *Coast Auto Racing's* primary track for coverage, they also regularly covered the activities at San Diego's Silvergate Speedway, Gilmore Stadium in Los Angeles, Compton's Moto Speedway, and Long Beach's Moto Speedway. Della also made sure that the activities during the month of May at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway were well-covered, too, as many of the Legion Ascot drivers headed east then.

Della used motorsports-related material, with permission, from the *Oakland Tribune*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Los Angeles Times* and the *Daily News* in order to keep her readers informed. She regularly ran Jack Buxton's drawings of racers,

mostly portraits, in her paper. In addition, her paper featured advertisements from such businesses as (Ed) Winfield Carburetor Company, L. "Curley" Wetteroth, (Fred) Offenhauser Engineering Company, Al Gordon's Club Rendezvous, Clyde Adams, George Wight's Bell Auto Parts Exchange, Jack Buxton's Desert Studio, and (Floyd) Clymer Motors.

An ambitious publisher Della Rice started year two of the publication with the following note, "This coming season promises to be bigger and better in every way for racing on the Coast, with Ascot, the outlaw boys, the midgets and motorcycles all having regular events scheduled. Representatives of *Coast Auto Racing* will be in attendance at all these meets to give complete returns. One and possibly two members of our staff will be at Indianapolis this year to give all the data from the big Memorial Day Classic. Connections have been made with the eastern tracks to send reports of their races, and altogether *Coast Auto Racing* should be able to give race fans complete data on all events in the United States. We have hopes of making *Coast Auto Racing* twice its present size before the end of our second year."

Indeed, to accomplish that mission, Della added representatives Ivar "Ike" Tolstead (Northwest), Lee Conti (San Diego), Floyd Clymer (Motorcycles), Jack Peters (San Bernardino) and Warren Burtis (Midgets) to the *Coast Auto Racing* staff. By mid-1935, Larry Sullivan was added as the ten-page paper's Midwest representative. The masthead tag line also became "Authentic News of Speedway Events." For 1936, W.H. "Bill" Bluett (San Joaquin Valley), Ward Swarthout (Imperial Valley), Phil Cummings (Arizona) and Ralph D. Demaree (Circulation Manager) were also added to the staff.

Year three was started in March of 1936, with the name of the publication becoming *Coast Auto Racing* and *International Speedway News* to reflect new-found interest in it from England and Scotland. It also went from a slick tabloid newspaper to a 9" by 12" sixteen-page magazine format with a color cover. By June, Della's son Kenneth W. Rice, Jr., and Charles Curryer were named assistant editor and Bay District representative, respectively. By July of that year, the business office moved to Hollywood, Calif., and it became *Coast Auto Racing* and *Motor Racing News*, with emphasis on the *Motor Racing News*. James Yano was soon added

as the eastern representative.

By November of 1936, (*Coast Auto Racing* and) *Motor Racing News* listed Della D. Rice and Donald Greene as publishers, Della D. Rice as managing editor, Kenneth W. Rice, Jr., as circulation manager, and Donald Greene as advertising manager. Additional representatives were Ed Maley (Imperial Valley), Harold Robinson (Ohio), Eddie Beaver (Wisconsin), R.E.P. Secretan (England), and Wolfgang Bitterhoff (Germany).

In 1937, Foland Horn (Arizona), Stan Lee (Colorado), LaVern "Flip" Fritch (Michigan), C. Ashton Cox (Mass.) Walt Woestman (photographer), Bob Van Nessi (Eastern) and Earl Chaney (Chicago) were added to the publication's line-up of staff members. Sadly, *Motor Racing News'* last edition was on June 5, 1937. While its run was ultimately short, Della Rice's *Coast Auto Racing* newspaper made an indelible mark on motorsports in this country during the Thirties.

By the start of World War II, Della wound up at *Star News* in Pasadena, where she worked as a typesetter, linetype operator and proof reader until her retirement in the late Sixties. Tragically, Kenneth Waldo Rice, Della's husband, passed away on January 5, 1951. Following her retirement, her husband's passing, and ultimately her inability to take care of herself, Della moved into the "Printers' Home" in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Della Desilva Sutherland Rice passed away in July of 1976, while living in Colorado Springs. She was survived by her now deceased sons, Ken, Jr., and Fred. Today, Ken's children Norman and James, and Fred's children Sharon and Hugh, live with wonderful memories of their grandmother Della and her love of open-wheel, dirt-track auto racing. Della's grandchildren and great-grandchildren, including current National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) journalist Kelly Rice Wade, still today visit tracks like Ventura Raceway and Irwindale Speedway in southern California.

By Tom Schmeh

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