

• 2016 INDUCTEES • 2016 INDUCTEES

national sprint car hall of fame



roy "bud" Grimm, jr

by Bryan Householder

Roy Francis "Bud" Grimm, Jr., was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on March 9, 1938, the son of Dorothy and Roy Grimm, Sr. His siblings were Margaret and John. Bud grew up in Pikesville and then Reisterstown, both near Baltimore. His uncle Lawrence owned a gas station and an open-wheel 'big car' that raced at the nearby Pikesville Speedway.

A mechanic by trade, and a Ford fan by inclination, Bud got started in racing while in his late teens. That would have been in the late 1950's, when he began working on a Maryland-based stock car owned by the Leibno brothers and driven by Neil Haight. The team raced mainly on the smaller tracks in Maryland, including Westport Stadium in Baltimore, Dorsey Speedway, and the larger Hagerstown Speedway. In 1959, the Leibno number 38 scored a feature win at Westport.

In 1960, Bud Grimm bought the 1940's-era Ford coupe from Bobby Leibno and kept Haight as his driver. There were a few changes along the way. When the team began to venture out to other tracks, there was another number 38 in the pit area. A piece of tape worked wonders, changing the number from 38 to 88. The tape, and the number, would stick.

Another change was that Grimm and Haight began to venture north to central Pennsylvania, racing their full-bodied and full-fendered coupe against the Pennsylvania cars that had lost their fenders sometime in the mid-1950's. By that time, the cars had started getting smaller and lighter as well.

The 1960 season was a learning time for Grimm and his team, although they did win two races at Dorsey. For 1961, Grimm began a trend that was to eventually put him at the forefront of the central Pennsylvania circuit. Grimm built a new car using a Ford Model 'A' body, but narrowing and lowering the car.

With this car, Grimm and Haight began an assault on the central Pennsylvania circuit. Racing at Williams Grove Speedway in Mechanicsburg on Fridays, Lincoln Speedway in New Oxford on Saturdays, and Susquehanna Speedway in Newberrytown on Sundays. During the season, they would score two feature wins at Lincoln; one of only three teams to win at the oval all year. Johnny Mackison Sr., in the Yorkshire Garage/Emrich Chevrolet number 1080 won 17 times, while Bobby Hersh, in the Trone number 39 won three times.

Moe Harden of Pikesville, Maryland, also drove for Bud Grimm; he finished second aboard the number 88 on Saturday, August 12, at Lincoln Speedway to John Mackison.

For 1962, Grimm tweaked on the coupe and got Haight going even better. That year, there were three wins at Susquehanna and one each at Williams Grove and Lincoln. 1963 was even better, with seven wins at Lincoln, two at Williams Grove, one at Susquehanna, and one at the newly re-opened Selinsgrove Speedway.

Then came the 1964 season. This time, Grimm went to work building a new lighter 'bug.' The car was much lighter and much smaller. It still carried the big 427-cubic-inch Ford engine, but the sheet metal was just that (and not a cut-down Detroit body).

There were some teething pains with the new car, but Haight scored three Lincoln wins that '64 season. But fate was about to send Grimm's team in a new direction. During the Race of Champions national championship stock car race at the famed Langhorne mile track late in the season, Neil Haight suffered serious injuries. Sadly, it became apparent that Haight wouldn't be able to race at the start of the 1965 season.

Over the winter months, while changing the roll cage and rear suspension on his number 88 'bug,' Grimm also searched for a new driver for his Liberty Auto Service team. He settled for a man with just three years of experience in the area's top class, but already with 26 wins to his name. When Ray Tilley ventured from the flatheads at Silver Spring Speedway in Mechanicsburg to the overhairs around the area in 1962, he won a race at Susquehanna. Over the next two years, he won 25 more races between the Williams Grove, Selinsgrove and Port Royal dirt tracks.

Tilley won his first race in Grimm's revamped number 88 'bug' on April 17, 1965, at Susquehanna. Before the season was out, the team would score a national record 47 wins in the central Pennsylvania and Maryland area. Tilley drove Grimm's Ford to 17 wins at Williams Grove, 16 wins at Selinsgrove, nine at Susquehanna, two each at Port Royal and Bedford, and a single win at Hagerstown. They were the point champions at Williams Grove, Selinsgrove and Susquehanna in 1965.

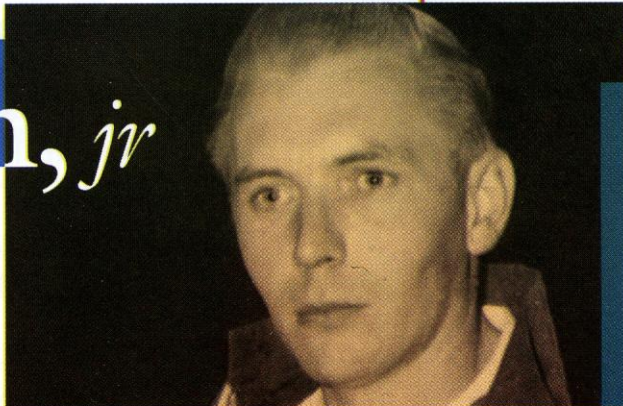


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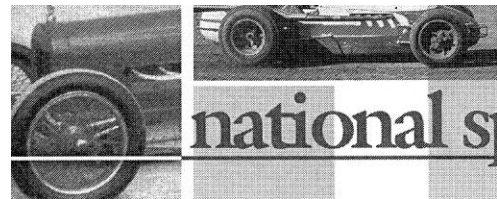
It should be noted that after Dick "Toby" Tobias drove the (Roy "Shorty") Emrich Chevrolet number 1 machine to 36 wins during the 1964 racing season, area promoters had outlawed fuel injection for '65 in an effort to make the competition more equal. Tilley's amazing season in Grimm's car came with a carburetor (running on alcohol) on that big 427-c.i. Ford.

It was during the '65 season that Grimm's new driver also introduced his car owner to a lady that would change his life. Sally Ditzler came from a racing family. Her father, John Ditzler, owned 1950's-era stock cars that George Speck drove to track titles at both Williams Grove and the Reading Fairgrounds. John Ditzler later became the technical inspector at Williams Grove.

The meeting between Sally Ditzler and Bud Grimm went very well and, in time, they would marry. Their children, sons Chris and Michael, were born in 1970 and '74, respectively.

After the tremendous '65 racing season, Bud Grimm made a decision that would literally change the face of central Pennsylvania auto racing. Fuel injection was again legal for the '66 season and Grimm felt it was time for a new car. This time, instead of building a car in his own shop, Grimm contacted famed sprint car builder Floyd Trevis about building a car to Pennsylvania's so-called '30 by 90' rule, which was 30-inches wide with a 90-inch wheelbase.

The new car, built on Floyd's champ-car jig and enclosed with a four-inch rail-frame (not tube-frame), met the letter of rules, if not the spirit. For all intents and purposes, it was the reason sprint cars became legal for weekly racing in central Pennsylvania in 1967. The team was just that dominant. Because some tracks weren't happy about the car competing at their ovals, Grimm and Tilley raced mainly at Williams Grove and Selinsgrove that season. At Williams Grove, they won 21 of the 31 races, including one of the half-dozen or so end-of-the-season races when the rules were opened up to allow sprint cars to compete.



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At Selinsgrove, Tilley won 14 times in 21 races. They also won four races at Hagerstown, two at Port Royal and one at Susquehanna. In two years together, Tilley and Grimm had equaled their car number in feature wins. They also repeated as track champions at Williams Grove and Selinsgrove.

The Trevis-built Grimm number 88 was the reason Jack Gunn elected to change his rules for the '67 season, allowing winged sprint cars to compete on the weekly circuit for the first time in central Pennsylvania. This allowed cars to invade the circuit from western Pennsylvania and Ohio, amongst other places. Most other tracks waited a year longer to join this trend, but it can honestly be said that Bud Grimm was mainly responsible for the shift to weekly sprint car racing in central Pennsylvania.

As Grimm ordered a new Trevis-built sprint car for the 1967 racing season, he sold the car that had been so successful in '66. Al Hamilton's very first sprint car was actually the 'bug' that Floyd Trevis built for Bud Grimm in '66.

That first year with a sprint car was the worst season Grimm and Tilley shared together. That big 427-c.i. Ford was just too heavy for the full sprint car and it took a while to get things working right. Eventually the team went to a smaller, lighter Ford engine, with big-valved aluminum heads from none other than Dan Gurney. In 1967, they won "only" 14 features: ten at Selinsgrove and four at Williams Grove. That was, however, enough wins to push their total wins together to over 100 in just three years.

In 1968, things came back together big time for Grimm and Tilley. The year started at the International Motor Contest Association (IMCA) Winternationals in Tampa, Florida, where Tilley put Grimm's car in the 'top five' in three of the five races, including a second to Pennsylvania rival Bobbie Adamson in the final race.

At home, Tilley would win 25 races that year, including ten at Selinsgrove, seven at Susquehanna, five at Williams Grove, and three at Lincoln. It should be noted that those three Lincoln wins all came in special extra-distance races and were in their only three visits there that year. They won 1968 point titles at Williams Grove, Selinsgrove and Susquehanna that year.

Tilley and Grimm also ventured to the IMCA races at the Allentown Fairgrounds that season. With a pair of second place finishes and a third in the other race, Tilley was declared the overall champion of the series. Keep in mind that, at this time, the central Pennsylvania circuit was using roll-cages and wings, while the IMCA circuit still didn't even use roll-cages in '68.

For the 1969 season, Grimm decided to replace his two-year-old sprint car with a new Trevis car. Once again, Al Hamilton stepped up to buy the older car and Grimm put Tilley in the new machine.

That season (1969) was the best for Tilley in a Grimm sprint car. Together the team won 27 races that year. There were 13 wins at Selinsgrove and another championship. At Williams Grove, another eight wins and the championship. The team divided Sunday nights between Susquehanna and Hagerstown, with three wins at Hagerstown and two at Susquehanna. They also won a special event at the Reading Fairgrounds for the open-competition sprint cars.

Another story is that Tilley completely dominated a United States Auto Club (USAC) sprint car race at Reading, only to drop to second place at the finish (behind winner Larry Dickson). Just prior to the start of

the feature, Grimm had learned that several USAC regulars planned to protest the Grimm car at the end of the race because it had raced the previous evening (Williams Grove) and hadn't had its parts re-magnaflexed before the next USAC start, which was one of the sanction's rules at the time.

Then, for the second time, the treacherous round mile in Langhorne stuck a 'monkey wrench' in Grimm's plans. In the Race of Champions on the now-paved Langhorne track, Tilley suffered serious head injuries (in someone else's modified stock car) that would basically put an end to his driving career. Gus Linder of Pittsburgh filled in for Tilley aboard the Grimm 88 at the Williams Grove National Open in 1969. But, it was obvious that Tilley would be unable to return for the '70 racing season and Grimm was again forced to search for a new driver.

On March 15, 1970, Hal Browning of Baltimore, Maryland, was aboard Bud Grimm's number 88 super-sprint at the Susquehanna season-opener. He finished second to winner Tommy Spriggle, and they were followed by Bobby Allen, Lynn Paxton and Bob Shaw in positions three through five, respectively.

However, after that one-race deal, Kansas City, Missouri, transplant Kenny Weld was Grimm's new driver for all of 1970. Weld had some experience with the Ford engines, having used one in the sidewinder sprint car that he built for Ford dealer Don Rice a few years earlier.

With Weld in the Grimm number 88, it was like nothing had changed. The team won 20 races that year. There were 11 wins at Lincoln, four at Hagerstown, three at Williams Grove, and two at Reading. Weld claimed the first of his four consecutive Williams Grove point titles that year, but Bobby Allen edged him out of the Lincoln point championship.

At the close of the 1970 racing season, Bud Grimm elected to take his racing future in a different direction. For the next two seasons, he worked with Hal Browning on a "heavy" modified stock car at the famed Reading Fairgrounds. He did have Tilley and Browning in his sprint car to open 1971 at Susquehanna and Hagerstown, though.

Then, in 1973, the quiet and humble Grimm returned for one more year of sprint car racing. He fielded a new Trevis-built sprint car with a Ford engine. His driver at the start of the season was Kramer Williamson. The season started out well with a win in the season opener at Lincoln, but that was to be the last win of Grimm's career.

Before the season ended, Grimm and Williamson would part ways, and Jimmy Kirk become the last of Bud Grimm's drivers.

The automatic transmission specialist stepped away from racing after 1973 to devote time to his Deer Park Service Center in Reisterstown and his growing family.

It wasn't until sometime later, when former driver Neil Haight returned from years in Colorado, that Grimm returned briefly to the race tracks. Haight's son Dave was driving a Haight sprint car and Grimm's son Chris became a member of the pit crew for a while. Until the Haight's got re-established in the area, they fielded the car out of Grimm's shop and Grimm spent some more time at the sprint car races.

Roy F. "Bud" Grimm, Jr., passed away on October 31, 1995, and is buried in Green Point, Pennsylvania. In little more than a decade of racing, Grimm's cars won 196 open-wheel (sportsman-modifieds, super-modifieds, bugs, 30x90's, sprint cars) races, including 87 feature wins in just five years of fielding full sprint cars.

Sally Grimm lives today in Jonestown, Pennsylvania.