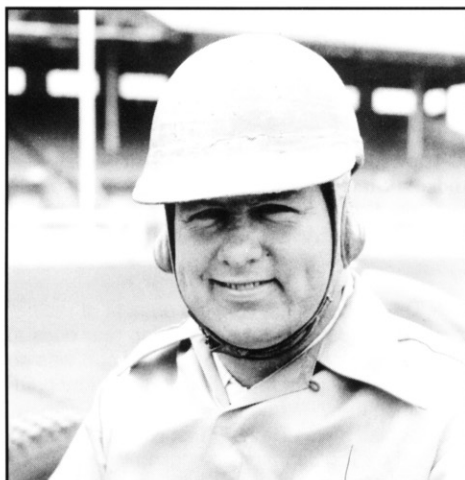


# NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

## EMMETT "BUZZ" BARTON



Emmett "Buzz" Barton *Bruce Craig Photos*

Emmett J. Barton was born in Chickasha, Okla., on October 7, 1916. Barton lived with relatives in Huntington Park, Calif., in 1934 while working for the railroad. It was at this time that he met Roy Richter, a young man just out of high school who was around the same age. Roy worked for George Wight during the day as a pattern-maker at Bell Auto Parts and as an auto mechanic at the Owl Garage in Huntington Park at night.

Prior to meeting Richter, Barton had never seen a race car nor an automobile race. However, it didn't take long for him to become addicted to the sport after seeing the Rajo-equipped Model T roadster that Richter drove in dirt track races and in speed trials at the various dry lakes in the high desert north of Los Angeles.

Barton competed in his first midget race in early 1935 in Los Angeles, where he drove a Saxon-powered Bell Special owned by Wight. By mid-May, he was headed back to Chickasha to pursue his driving career.

In the late 1930's and early '40s, Barton raced and occasionally won at the tracks around Oklahoma, including Chickasha, Tulsa, Oklahoma City, and even Belleville, Ks. When he raced at Taft Stadium in Oklahoma City for promoters O.D. Lavelly and his son Ray, his competition included Cecil Green, Jimmy Reece and Jud Larson.

After World War II, he began traveling extensively to race midgets. From 1945 through '50, Buzz won 32 features at Olympic Stadium in Kansas City, Mo., Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Duncan, Okla. His car owners included Ervin Wolfe, Earl Johnson, Elza Bynum, John Zink and the Gibson Brothers, Paul and Quincie. He won the overall Oklahoma state title in 1948, the same year he won the Tulsa point championship for Zink. He also claimed the Oklahoma City indoor title the following year.

It was during that time that Buzz crashed hard after running over Angelo Howerton's wheel at Oklahoma City. In fact, Barton's helmet came off in the incident. When the "Buzzer" returned to the track from the hospital, he was asked by the announcer, "Well, what did the doctor say?" Barton replied, "I'm crazy."

John Zink financed a Kurtis-Kraft kit car in 1947 which was assembled by Felix Graves, Buzz Barton, and son Jack Zink, at a cost of \$8,000. And in early '48, the cigar-chomping Barton barnstormed that Offenhauser midget on the West Coast with the American Automobile Association (AAA). His efforts netted him a twelfth place ranking in their national point standings.

In 1949, Buzz drove Quince Gibson's Offy, while Guy "Mac" McHenry piloted the team car on the circuit, which included Houston's Playland Park. The next year "Bud" Hemphill was his teammate.

In 1951, Emmett "Buzz" Barton stretched the ex-Walker Brothers Kurtis-Kraft midget, then owned by Oklahoma City's Bill Meers, into a sprint car and joined the International Motor Contest Association (IMCA). Barton left the organization that same season to again race with AAA, where he placed ninth in their Eastern Division 'big car' point standings.

Barton's first AAA championship ride came at Syracuse, N.Y., in late 1951. He entered the Indianapolis 500 in '52 with the Pete Wales Trucking Special and in '53 with the L.E. Parks Motor Company Offy, although he failed to qualify both years. It is said that he was once given a check for \$100,000 by his champ car owner H. Allan Chapman, who said to buy himself a race car. Barton apparently tore up the check because Chapman was drunk.

The Tampa, Fla., racer, who worked as a trucker in the off-season, returned to the IMCA fair circuit by the mid-Fifties. With the exception of 1962, he raced with them until he retired in '73.

He won at Winchester, Ind., in 1954 and was eighth in IMCA points in '55 wheeling the Callaway Ranger-powered machine. In 1956, he placed ninth in points with one win at St. Paul, Minn., aboard the Ennis M. "Dizz" Wilson Offy. He also competed in the United States Auto Club (USAC) Florida Winter Sprint Series.

1957 brought seven victories in IMCA competition at Tampa, Fla., Newport, Tenn., Jamestown, N.D., LaCrosse, Wisc., Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and St. Paul. He finished second in points that year behind Bobby Grim in Hector Honore's 'Black Deuce'. Those behind Barton in IMCA points that year were Don Carr, Al "Cotton" Farmer, Johnny Pouelsen, Bob Cleberg, Jerry Kemp, Vern Chamberlain, Pete Folse and Eddie Loetscher. Buzz also raced in USAC's Tangerine Tournament midget car races over the winter.

The following year, 1958, saw Buzz finish fifteenth in IMCA points, yet he remained active in USAC national championship car racing in the James Campbell Special. In the ex-Sid Street car, he led eight laps at Williams Grove in July and finished third there behind Jud Larson and Johnny Thomson. The salty driver with exceptional mechanical ability also raced USAC midgets and won a midget feature back at Olympic Stadium.

Barton, married and the father of a daughter, captured one IMCA feature win at Grand Forks, N.D., in 1959 and finished sixth in points while driving the Wilson, Campbell, and Lawhead Brothers Offies.

Seven more wins were tallied in 1960 at Tampa, LaCrosse, Des Moines, Iowa, Lincoln, Nebr., Hutchinson, Ks., and Oklahoma City. Barton campaigned for Bill MacDonald before joining Harold "Red" Lempelius in mid-June, and he clinched second in IMCA points behind fellow Tampan Pete Folse. Those behind Barton in the points were A.J. Shepherd, Jerry Blundy, Jerry Shumaker, Leroy Neumayer, Jim McElreath, Herschel Wagner, Harold Leep and Gordon Woolley.

Two wins in the Irene Lempelius Offy at Tampa and in the Hawkeye Futurity at Des Moines in 1961 again netted the dry-slick track specialist a second place IMCA points finish behind Folse. Leep, Jerry Richert, McElreath, Blundy, Wagner, Johnny White, Arnie Knepper and "Buzz" Rose all finished behind Barton in the points.

Following his "retirement" in 1962, the cagey veteran Barton came back with three wins in '63 at Sedalia, Mo. with Roy Thomas, and Lincoln and Spencer, Iowa, with the Lempelius Offy. After starting the year driving for Steve Lazzara and Bill MacDonald, and taking the wins, Barton finished eighth in points.

According to first-time Des Moines winner Blundy, "I could hear that Thomas Offy barking at me in the closing laps of the race. Ol' Buzz was running right on my tail. He was the toughest guy to beat on a slick race track. He had a reputation of bumping you a few times entering a turn on a slick track just to let you know he was there. Man, I was ready for anything! I was never so happy in my life to see a checkered flag. Ya know, Buzz didn't even bump me once!"

Barton steered the Lempelius ride to wins at Cedar Rapids and Huron, S.D., finishing seventh in the seasonal standings in 1964.

A win at Tampa with Roy Thomas kept the "Buzzer" ninth in IMCA in 1965. He scored a win aboard the Hegge/Besse car at Owatonna, Minn., in '66, and at Tampa in '67 running the Dawson Shelor car. He also finished fourth in points at the Twin City Speedway in their super-modified division behind Don "Itch" Daniels, Barry Kettering and Jerry Lepinski.

From 1968 through 1973, Barton ran occasionally with IMCA, although he never again visited victory lane nor finished in the top fifteen in points. However, when he finally retired in 1973, he had 23 feature wins to his credit and had wound up fourth in all-time IMCA points.

Today, Emmett "Buzz" Barton lives on Lake Texhoma in Kingston, Okla., where the sign on the door reads, "Forget the Dog, Beware of the Owner."