

1998 Huset's Speedway Hall of Fame Inductees:

- *Promoter: Fred Buckmiller*
- *Driver: Marshall Gardner*
- *Track Founder: Tilman Huset*
 - *Driver: Jim Matthews*
 - *Driver: Paul Stogsdill*

1998 HUSET'S SPEEDWAY HALL OF FAME

by Tom Savage

Forty four years ago Elvis was yet to be discovered, a wall had not yet been erected and dismantled in Berlin, Chevrolet was still bolting together only six cylinder engines for their sedans, the Interstate Highway System was an idea without a single mile and Brandon area farmer Tilman Huset found another use for his soybean field.

Today Elvis and the Berlin Wall have both come and gone, Chevrolet now cranks out some monster V-8 engines, the Interstate Highway System is a maze of twin ribbons of concrete that criss-cross the country and Til's soybean field is Huset's Speedway.

In that span of 44 years we have put a man on the moon, conquered Polio, dammed the Missouri River and discovered megabytes, medical transplants and McDonalds. Gone forever are drive-in theatres, a gallon of gasoline for a quarter, double row corn pickers, double features and daily passenger trains.

The automobile has evolved from a Detroit produced monster of chrome, fins, bells and whistles to bullet shaped fuel misers motivated by foreign manufacturers. Automobile racing has grown from a rowdy bunch of dirt devils, grease under the fingernails 'here I come get the hell out of my way' warriors of wrinkled sheet metal to the respected and accepted spot in the sporting world today.

Much of that transformation took place right here at Huset's Speedway.

It is time to recognize and honor the people who have laid the foundation for what we all now enjoy.

Huset's Speedway Hall of Fame, born out of the need to remember, respect and hold in awe the accomplishments of so many who gave so much to our sport, will have the charter

inductions this Sunday evening.

These five men are the beginning of a long-range program that will induct five new members each year for the first ten years and three every year afterwards. The names of these hall of famers will be enshrined forever on the grounds of Huset's Speedway for all to view, recall and speak of in reverant tones.

The charter member inductees into the Huset Hall of Fame are:

FRED BUCKMILLER

Fred started his involvement in automobile racing as a car owner at the old Soo Speedway and would say years later "My race cars were the prettiest ones out there, they were painted bright colors and looked really nice, but they didn't go very fast". In 1958, Huset's Speedway was purchased by the Sioux Falls Stock Car Association from owner Til Huset. The reported price was \$14,000.00 and the group immediately named Fred as the new promoter. Fred took to his new task with the idea of making weekly racing more professional, affordable to the racers and fan friendly for his customers. He held those same ideals until his death in 1982. Fred made sure his Huset program ALWAYS started on time at 8:00 p.m., ran the events swiftly in order to get the event over by 10:30 p.m. and he INSISTED that all personnel in the infield wear white clothing. For years he told his racers the 'white' thing was an insurance requirement which it wasn't. It was his way of dressing the infield to a more professional level. Fred was the first local promoter to convince the Sioux Empire Fair Board that his Huset modifieds could fill the grandstand at the fairgrounds. His crowds at the fair are still hot topics of discussion as he filled the main grandstand many times and forced the fairboard to erect more bleachers on both the north and south side of the grandstand. He also took his beloved modifieds on the road to fairs in Aberdeen, Huron, Parker, Spencer and Minot. Fred was an old-school promoter who performed every task, he bladed and watered the track, he sold tickets, popped popcorn, visited radio and TV stations and held the weekly pre-race drivers meeting. One of his favorites quotes, that he used at every pit meeting, was "Remember guys, we are a bunch of poor devils in a rich mans racket". Fred Buckmiller passed away in 1982.

MARSHALL GARDNER

Marshall started his driving career in 1950 in Pipestone, Minnesota driving a Ford coupe for Al Fiedler. In 1952 he became a driver / owner building his first of many Plymouth coupes. Marshall always ran a Plymouth coupe, usually painted black and yellow and numbered either '191', '161', '9' or '6'. He was the 1954 and 1955 track champion at the old Soo Speedway and in one stretch in 1954 he won 12 features out of 14 starts between Soo and Huset's Speedways. Marshall was very instrumental in assisting Til Huset when the new

Huset's Speedway was first started and competed in the first feature at Huset's on May 23rd, 1954 finishing in 5th position. Marshall was among the first to realize the importance of good press for the fledging sport of stock car racing and encouraged professional behavior among his fellow racers. He visited the newspapers, radio and TV stations to put a positive spin on stock car racing and was also an early day showman. He once dressed as a woman and won a special 'powder-puff' event peeling off the dress in the victory lane celebration. Marshall retired from driving in 1961 and has remained a solid supporter of Huset's Speedway in the ensuing years.

TILMAN HUSET

Til Huset was an early day driver on the old IMCA 'big car' circuit. He started in 1928, in a car powered by a Whippet engine, at Ruskin Park in Forestburg, SD. He competed at the old Renner, SD half mile as well as Owatonna and Jackson in Minnesota, Mason City and Sioux City in Iowa and tracks in Missouri and Kansas. In 1949, the International Motor Contest Association (IMCA) started a 'new car' late model stock car class and Til removed the headlights and strapped the doors shut on the family Ford sedan and competed in the new craze of stock car racing. In 1953, he decided to build a dirt race track and selected the present site because of the hillside and the natural seating he could build among the Cottonwood and Oak trees. Early in the spring of 1954 Til, along with his son-in-law Gene Gunther, began plowing up the former soybean field with an old two bottom plow. Once the topsoil had been loosened, he began heaping the dirt into a banking with the aid of an old hand-me-down road grader. He later enlisted the assistance of 'some guy from Luverne who had a big 'ol cat with a huge blade' to finish the banking of all four corners. Satisfied with the degree of banking and overall configuration of the race track, Til climbed in an old Studebaker and began the process of packing the track and 'squashing' the biggest dirt clods. He spent several long days in April of 1954 circling the track and reported to Gunther at the completion of the packing procedure "It's gonna be alright". When the first race was held on May 23rd, 1954 it was a stark, crude facility. There were no guard rails, lights, bleachers, concessions stands or PA. systems, A rented truck from the Sunbeam Bakery, that had two speakers mounted on the roof of the 1953 Ford panel truck, drove DOWN THE HILL from the highway and parked at approximately, the same location as the center aisle to the race track gate near the starters stand. A gentleman sat behind the steering wheel of the truck and announced the first Huset race. Fans could not hear him but it didn't really matter as they could not see the race cars anyway for the blinding dust. The searing heat and uncontrolled dust problems forced Til to alter his weekly program and he ran his last Sunday afternoon race on July 4th. He then announced a suspension in racing until he could install lights for night racing and held the first night race at the track on Friday July 23rd. Harold Petree won the first heat that night, the first night race ever held at Huset's.

Til started the 1955 season with every Friday night programs but small crowds and dwindling fields of cars forced another change in format. Wednesday nights for two weeks were no better and an attempt at Thursday nights ended with the July 14th show. Til

announced another suspension in racing activity until 'improvements' could be made and once again mounted a grader. He carved a 1/5 mile oval using the original first and second turns but started the third turn near the back straightaway pit gate, cut through the present day location of the infield concession stand and hooked back to the front chute near today's starters stand. He left the third and fourth turns of the 3/8 untouched. The first race on the new 1/5 miler was held on Friday September 2, 1955, won by Al Fiedler. The re-built track still was not the answer and the last event held on the 1/5 miler was on September 16th, won by Petree. It was the last event promoted by Til Huset. The track never re-opened and sat idle for both the 1956 and 1957 seasons, a weed infested ghost of the past. In 1958, Til sold the speedway to the Sioux Falls Stock Car Association. The first thing the new owners did was to remove the 1/5 miler from the infield to its present original configuration. Although he no longer had any direct connection to the speedway, Til was a weekly grandstand fan at the Huset Speedway until his death in November of 1985.

JIM MATTHEWS

Jim started his driving career in 1953 at the old Mitchell (SD) Speedway in a 1940 Ford coupe built by himself and E.J. Schneider. He later teamed with Red Hartford and the two toured the tri-state area in the twin 1937 Ford coupes, painted black and white and numbered '20' and '21'. They both competed in the first race ever held at Husets on May 23rd, 1954. Red finished in 7th and Jim's number 21 did not finish the event. Jim and Red ran at every track they could make in the barnstorming days of the 1950's and early 1960's running as many as five times a week and many times twice on Sundays, racing in South Dakota, Iowa and Minnesota. In the mid-sixties, Jim joined the team of Mario and Jay Egge and their driver Dave Engebretson.

The two car team of '32 Ford sedans, powered by Ford 289 OHV engines, were forerunners to the modern supermodifieds and Jim and Dave won a lot of features. In 1967, one of the most famous of all cars to ever churn dirt at Husets Speedway, 'Blue Thunder', was unveiled and Jim Matthews drove the car into the history ledgers. Jim won supermodified features with 'Thunder' at every weekly stop and the fair circuit at Huron, Aberdeen, Parker and Spencer. Jim was the 1968 Huset Speedway supermodified champ and two time titleholder at both Brookings and Madison. Jim was the most popular driver to ever race at Husets Speedway with both the fans and his fellow competitors. He was among the first to recognize the importance of good driver / fan relationships and would sit for hours after a race signing autographs or just visiting with his legions of followers. A testament to his acceptance among the racers was his three time award winning 'Sportsman of the Year' trophy voted on by his peers in the pits. Jim Matthews lost his life in a supermodified crash on August 15, 1976 at the Sioux Empire Fairgrounds.

PAUL STOGSDILL

Paul Stogsdill started his driving career in 1951 at the old Caseys Speedway in Yankton. He finished in 3rd position in that first feature race and still has the check that was awarded for the place of \$6.00. Paul and his older brother Leonard were early day outlaws roaming the country armed with their team Ford coupes numbered '01' and '02'. They ran the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa and Minnesota and the cream and black colored coupes finished 1-2 on many, many occasions. They later added a third Ford coupe to their stable and Bucky Wagner drove the 'OX' while Paul steered the '01' and Leonard the '02'. Stock car racing in the early fifties was a rough and tumble affair of fender duels, fistfights and a high attrition rate for race cars. Paul and Leonard Stogsdill were among the first to recognize the need for race cars that could withstand the punishment, run strong and be safe. Stogsdill built stock cars of the 1950's set the standard for the era and a lot of the Ford modifieds were near duplicates of Paul and Leonard. In 1954, Paul raced in 30 A features and won 13 times, a winning percentage that any driver in the infield tonight would gladly accept.

In 1955, Leonard was injured and Paul retired from driving competition. But racers are racers and, in 1973, he returned to the stock car battles. Armed with a 1964 Ford late model, Paul won two more track championship titles.

Both Paul and Leonard competed in the first feature event here at Husets Speedway. Leonard wheeled his '02' across the finish line in second place behind the winner of the first feature race ever held at Husets Speedway on May 23rd, 1954, Paul Stogsdill.

Paul is now retired and continues to live in Wagner, South Dakota.