

### **2001 Huset's Speedway Hall of Fame Inductees:**

- *Jay Egge*
- *Oliver Fokken*
- *John Stevenson*
- *Earl Thomas*
- *LeLand VanEmmerik*

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### **2001 HUSET'S SPEEDWAY HALL OF FAME**

by Tom Savage

Forty seven years ago Eisenhower was the President of the United States, less than 500 sprint cars were in competition racing with the IMCA, AAA, CRA or CSRA, Steve Kinser and Sammy Swindell were not yet born, almost all passenger automobiles were American made, the fastest way to send a letter across the country was Air Mail, electric powered typewriters were the latest craze and Husets Speedway started racing automobiles on Sundays near Brandon, South Dakota.

Today Eisenhower is a memory and sprint cars number in the thousands. The AAA was replaced by USAC, the CRA by the SCRA, IMCA now runs a limited sprint car class and the CSRA is a ghost of other times. The World of Outlaws is now the hot ticket in sprint car racing. Steve Kinser and Sammy Swindell are growing nearer and nearer to retirement from competition and foreign made automobiles have nearly half the market. Twenty four hour air mail has been replaced by mega-second E Mail and computers have made electric typewriters doorstops. Out at Husets Speedway, near Brandon, South Dakota, automobile racing is still a Sunday staple.

Husets Speedway, at age 47, is the longest running sports venue in the immediate three state area and has earned a legacy, a tradition and a rich history in the sport of automobile racing. The Huset Speedway Hall of Fame is a testament to the men and women who have been an important part of the history of the speedway. The Hall of Fame honors these people for their contributions to the sport we all enjoy today. From the early humble beginnings of smoke belching modified coupes to the present fire puking sideways sprint cars, the Husets Speedway Hall of Fame salutes and applauds the enshrined members and the new inductees.

JAY EGGE  
(Owner, Builder, Driver, Sponsor, Safety Crew)

Jay got his start in racing by helping fellow Hall of Famer Marshall Gardner in the early

1950's. When the Sioux Falls Racing Association purchased Husets Speedway in July of 1958, Jay was at that first race spinning a ratchet. He's been here ever since. Jay and his brother Marlow built a variety of stock cars in the late 1950's and early 1960's and Jay served a short term as a driver. An end over end front chute flip ended his driving career in 1961 but did not dampen his love of racing. As the supermodifieds slowly replaced the modifieds Jay and Marlow built some winning machines. Hall of Famer Dave Engebretson drove the Egge #15 to the 1964 Huset championship. In 1968 Hall of Famer Jim Matthews wheeled the Ford powered #15 Egge car to the supermodified title in the famous "Blue Thunder" car. "Blue Thunder", with the unique Ford engine against the potent Chevrolets, was one of Husets more famous and successful supermodifieds. On the 15th of August, 1976, Matthews lost his life in a spill at the Sioux Empire Fairgrounds. Jay never owned another race car. Instead he continued to sponsor Husets, his sponsorship of the speedway is over 30 years and counting, and was among the driving forces to have adequate fire fighting equipment in the infield at all times. Jay has served on the fire safety crew for over 25 years and has given of his time and resources whenever he was asked. Jay and his wife Dorothy of 52 years were honored by the South Dakota State University as the family of the year after all six of their children graduated from the Brookings college. Jay and Dorothy live just south of Sioux Falls.

#### OLIVER FOKKEN

(Speedway official and artist with a paint spray gun.)

Oliver Fokken got involved in racing by helping Hall of Famer Al Fiedler when Al built one of his first Ford coupes in 1953. When Bob Van Anne, father of Huset pit steward Tommy Van Anne, opened his new Soo Speedway in the spring of 1954, he hired Oliver to guard the back pit gate. Van Anne quickly realized Oliver had more value in the scorers stand and moved him to that position early in the season. Oliver scored every race at Soo Speedway from that time forward and also kept various stats and compiled points. He was employed as a body and paint man at a Sioux Falls new car dealership at the time and used his skills after hours at his South Sioux Falls 43rd street home / garage. In the early to mid-fifties the Fokken homestead looked like the pit area of any speedway with stock cars lined up awaiting a Fokken paint job. Oliver built a portable air compressor and drove to many a race car shop to perform his magic / wizardry with the gun. In 1958 Hall of Famer Fred Buckmiller asked Oliver to join his staff at Husets. With the blessing of Van Anne, Oliver moved to Husets and joined forces with Buckmiller as an "official". Oliver performed many tasks including scoring, pit gate and pit area security, traveling to distant stops on Fred's agenda to fairs in Minot, Aberdeen, Huron, Parker, Spencer and the Sioux Empire Fair and keeping track of the accumulated points. Today points are tabulated with a computer and can be completed in a matter of minutes. Oliver used a short pencil and a long eraser and had current points at every race including some two and three day in a row shows. With a few minor modifications in the tabulation of points, Oliver can easily be credited with the current system of points and point averages as he pioneered that concept nearly 40 years ago. It is estimated that he painted over 150 race cars either with his portable unit, his 43rd street garage or from his beloved Pumpkin Center Paint and Body Shop on old highway 16 west of Sioux Falls. Oliver retired from racing in 1978 and he and his wife Patrica live in Sioux Falls.

JOHN STEVENSON  
(Driver)

John Stevenson started his driving career in 1964 in a supermodified at Stillwater, Minnesota. He ran the supermodified throughout the late sixties and also took his first sprint car ride in 1965 in a cageless car. He ran the cageless sprint car in IMCA fair dates at St. Paul, Minnesota, Lincoln, Nebraska, Des Moines, Iowa and Huron, South Dakota. With the #31 supermodified he won track championships at Stillwater and Princeton in Minnesota and Cedar Lake, Wisconsin. In the early 1970's he joined forces with Bernard "Beanie" Wamre and John Bethke and went sprint car racing full tilt. Adept with or without a wing atop, John first ran with the Minnesota based Midwest Sprint Association and became a two time champion with the organization. He later ran with Dave Van Patten's National Speedway Contest Association, an offshoot of the original IMCA, and won their title two years in a row in 1980-1981. He started running Knoxville weekly in the early 70's where he eventually scored 16 feature event victories and ran the prestigious Knoxville Nationals every year from 1975 - 1988. His best national finish was fourth in 1979 behind winner Ron Shuman, Randy Smith and Sammy Swindell. He first ran Husets in the early 1980's usually with his familiar #31 Osborne built piece but did on occasion run Lenard McCarl's #7X. Starting in 1984 John ran Husets every Sunday night and was crowned sprint car champ at the end of the year. He repeated that feat in both 1985 and 1986 to become Husets Speedway first three time sprint car champ. In addition to his stunning achievements at Husets he also won the 1980 Cheaters Day event at the Sioux Empire Fairgrounds. John ranks 15th in career feature wins at Husets with 15 victories. John retired from competition in 1988 and lives in St. Paul with his wife Judy.

EARL THOMAS  
(Driver)

Earl started his driving career at the old Soo Speedway in 1958 at the wheel of a 1941 Ford coupe #77. He later moved to Husets that same summer and assumed the driving chores of a Chevrolet coupe when regular driver Bill Leesch was injured. He ran a variety of modified stock cars throughout the late fifties and early sixties before hooking up with car owner and Hall of Famer Fred Buckmiller. Buckmiller, as well as the promoter of Husets at that time, had a 1934 Plymouth coupe powered by a Dodge slant six engine and Thomas drove the red #5 to several feature wins. With the dawning of the supermodified age, unofficially 1964, Earl stepped up his program and became involved in a fierce battle for the track championship in 1966. Earl, at the wheel of Bob Schrievers sleek #97, and Watertown's Roger Swenson, driving his own yellow and white #06, ran hair tooth and toenail all season neither willing to cede an inch on the race track. At the final race of the season the two were tied in points. Swenson finished one position in front of Earl at the checkered flag and won the title by a mere 2 points. Next year Earl, again armed with the Schriever #97, won the supermodified championship by a wide margin and also scored wins at the Clay County Fair and State Fair in Huron. Driving for Don Hander in 1969, Earl won his second supermodified Huset title to become the first driver to win two supermodified championships. He ranks 11th in career feature wins at Husets with 17 wins coming in modified and supermodified cars. Earl retired

from competition in 1976 and now lives in Chandler, Arizona with his wife Wendy.

LE LAND VAN EMMERIK  
(Driver)

LeLand Van Emmerik started his career in 1975 with a six cylinder modified car that he built entirely himself. In 1976 he was the Huset six cylinder modified champion and also the six cylinder modified champion at Madison's then Interlakes Speedway. He moved to the supermodifieds in 1977 in a Don Jones built car owned by Dan Haaland of Clarkfield, Minnesota. At the end of the 1979 season LeLand was ready to move up to sprint car racing. A new Maxwell chassis was in the Haaland stable and with Jones spinning the ratchets they were a formidable team. LeLand won his first Huset sprint car feature in 1980 and won his first Jackson feature the same year. In the winter of 1980-1981, the team ventured on the road and ran with the World of Outlaws in Florida, Texas and Oklahoma and were loaded for bear when the Huset season started in May. LeLand won the sprint car championship in 1981 at Husets just six years after his humble beginnings in the modified. He continued to run both Husets and Jackson and in 1982 he won the sprint car championships at both joints. Then he retired! In the short span of seven years he won two track titles with the six cylinder modified, two sprint car titles at Husets and one at Jackson. LeLand ranks 7th in career feature wins at Husets with 21 victories in modifieds and sprint cars and is the only man to win championship titles in those two classes. He and his wife Janine live in Salem and LeLand rarely attends races and instead spends his weekends on the golf course.