

2002 Huset's Speedway Hall of Fame Inductees:

- ***Bud Berger***
 - ***Marv DeWall***
 - ***Mel DeYoung***
 - ***Roger Larson***
 - ***Bob Lukes***
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2002 HUSET'S SPEEDWAY HALL OF FAME

By Tom Savage

When Tilman Huset opened his little 3/8 miler on the 23rd of May, 1954, little did anyone realize the speedway would still be in operation 48 years later. In 1954, the track had no guard rails, (except for a series of railroad ties upended with bridge planking bolted to them on the front chute), no bleacher seating (most of the 1158 paid admissions spread blankets under the shade of several giant scrub Oak trees that lined the hillside), no lighting as the events were all scheduled for Sunday afternoons, no announcer, (although a Sunbeam Bakery Ford van with a speaker mounted on top and the “announcer” sitting behind the steering wheel attempted to tell something about the action that nobody could hear) and no track preparation as huge clouds of dust completely obscured the cars once the green flag dropped. From those humble, very humble, beginnings Husets Speedway has grown over the last 48 years to a modern, up to date showplace of weekly racing action. In those 48 years the sport of racing automobiles has evolved from the early day modified stock car coupes and sedans, to supermodifieds to the present billing of sprint cars and late model stock cars. In 48 years a lot of men and women have played a pivotal role in the development, success and popularity of Husets Speedway. It is for that reason that the Huset Speedway Hall of Fame was organized. To remember, to preserve, to honor and to enshrine these people in the coveted Hall of Fame.

ARNOLD “BUD” BERGER

Bud Berger started his driving career in 1958 at Husets driving a car owned by Clarence Rubin, father of current Huset owners Steve & Greg. Entered in the “strictly stock” class, the 1949 Ford tudor sedan had the word ‘jOker’ painted on the side and the “0” in the word became the official number. By the end of that first season Berger and Rubin had used up four Ford sedans, Clarence retired from race car ownership and Berger became a helmet toting pit walker. He then drove the George Questad #9 Ford coupe with a miniature Yogi

bear strapped to the roof. The bear was the prank/joke of longtime Huset announcer Dave Dedrick and the nickname stuck to Berger for the rest of his driving career. Berger flipped the coupe in a first turn snafu completely demolishing the car but “yogi” survived the wild ride atop the car. Berger later drove cars for Russ Gaffney, Mel Hagberg, Harry Pollman and Ron Tysdal. The Pollman car was one of the first cut-down supermodifieds and designed for a smaller man than Berger and Pollman didn’t want to move the seat back. In his own words of that first ride Berger said “when I got strapped in the damn thing my knees were around my ears but I won the feature”. Pollman decided to move the seat and Berger responded by winning the season championship 35 lapper in the car. He later ran the supermodified of Ron Tysdal and rode out a nasty third turn flip that left the car upside down against the wall. Attempts to remove Berger from the upended piece were not going well because of his tremendous size. Hanging upside down and growing more frustrated by the minute, Berger said “Just tip the sumbitch back on its wheels and shove me off”. Bud retired from driving mid-season in 1969 following the devastating spill of Marlyn Hanten at Madison. Hanten landed in the lake behind the third turn and Bud was among the first on the scene and held Hanten’s head above water until the rescue crews arrived. Instead of driving Bud became involved in the operation of the speedway and an officer in the Midwest Racing Association. He quickly became Hall of Famer Fred Buckmiller’s right hand man and assisted in the weekly running of the program as a flagman, water truck driver, pit steward and, because of his intimidating size of nearly 6 and a half feet and tipping the scales at a 1/3 of a ton, a combination bouncer and referee. He also served as flagman at Rock Rapids, Iowa and Brookings and was a member of the board of directors of the speedway. He retired from active involvement in 1989 and spends his winters in Arizona and can be found in the grandstands here at Husets every Sunday night.

MARV DE WALL

Marv DeWall drove in his first race in 1952 at Estilline in a 1934 Ford coupe appropriately called “The Wild One”. Marv won his first feature in 1954 at Mitchell and started racing at Casino Speedway in Watertown the same year. When he ran Casino he arrived in the family 1940 Ford coupe full of kids and a wife. He scooted the family to the grandstand, removed the headlights and raced the coupe. When the racing was over he replaced the headlights and family and drove the “racer” back home. He was a three time Casino track champion in 1955-56-57 and also won the Tri-State title three years in a row 57-58-59. The Tri-State schedule included Watertown, Aberdeen and Fargo. In 1964 Marv moved to Jackson, Minnesota to be closer to the racing action at the storied fast half miler. In a remarkable accomplishment of driving different kinds of race cars, Marv won Jackson championship titles in 1961 and 1962 in full bodied stock cars, 1966 and 1971 in supermodifieds and was the sprint car champion in 1978-1980-1981. A seven time track champion in three divisions of race cars is a record that will not soon be eclipsed. In 1980, Husets ran sprint cars weekly for the first time as the age of the supermodified had ran its course. Marv won the Huset sprint car championship in 1980 to become the FIRST sprint car champion at the 3/8 miler. In addition to his many track championships, he also won the FIRST Jackson Sprint Car Nationals in 1979 and won fair features at Spencer and Huron as well as the Sioux Empire Fair. Marv was a very superstitious racer and abhorred the color green. One night one of his pit crew arrived wearing

a green t-shirt. Marv ripped the shirt off the man, threw it on the ground and stomped it with both feet, poured gasoline over the wrinkled shirt, ignited it into a ball of flames, snuffed out the flames and took the ashes outside the pit area and buried them in the parking lot. Marv drove in competition for the final time at Rapid City in 1989 ending an astonishing 37 year career. The DeWall name lives on in sprint car racing as sons Doug and Gary compete weekly at Husets with the familiar DeWall trademark number 16. Marv and his wife Joan live in Wyoming where they raise cattle and horses but still remain close to the racing fraternity.

MEL DE YOUNG

Mel DeYoung grew up in a racing environment as his father, Hank, was the proud owner of a modified stock car. The #21 '33 Ford coupe, steered by John Cook and sponsored by Hank's Ace Motel, was a constant at Husets in the early years. Mel, clearly bitten by the racing bug, purchased his first race car in 1960 and hired Bob Lukes as the driver. "We didn't do to good the first year because we were always squabbling among ourselves but the second year we started winning a lot of races". The DeYoung / Lukes team spent most of the '62 season in a fierce battle with Hall of Famer Arnie Nimmerfroh. Lukes won 4 features and finished in the top 5 six times but still fell 30 some points short of Nimmerfroh for the track championship. Mel and Bob had a stranglehold on the half miler at the Sioux Empire Fairgrounds during the fair winning that event three years in a row. "Everybody thought we were cheating when we ran off from 'em at the fairgrounds. We had the engine torn down three years in a row and it always came out the same. The maximum was 300 cubic inches and that 'ol Dodge Slant Six measured out at 290 every year". As a car owner Mel continued to enjoy moderate success but the expense of maintaining a top notch car was taking a toll. "One night my wife asked how much money I had tied up in the race car and I said 'two' and she though it was hundred and I knew it was time to pull the plug". He left the ranks of car owner and enlisted his services as an official at Husets. He was the head scorer, worked the back gate, figured points and handicapped the starts but really hit big casino when he took over the sales and production of a new kind of program. "All Fred (Hall of Famer Fred Buckmiller) ever had was a single piece of paper with the points on one side and one ad on the other. I think it sold for a quarter and it wasn't even worth that." Mel produced a 10 page glossy program that, for the first time, included photographs of the drivers and racing action. He introduced lucky numbers, coupons, explanations of the flags and short driver bios. The 10 pager quickly grew to 20 and became a model for other speedway programs. In 1982 Mel purchased the Interlakes (now Lake County) Speedway near Madison and took on a new responsibility as promoter. "I thought I knew about running a race track until I got Madison and I discovered I had a whole lot to learn". He sold the track several years ago and now spends his winters in Arizona but can be found every Sunday night in the grandstand at Husets.

ROGER LARSON

Roger Larson started his driving career at Husets in the early sixties aboard a 1956 Ford tudor sedan "hobby" stocker. He later carved the fenders off the baby blue #104 stock car to compete with the open wheeled modifieds. He secured a ride in a modified and made his debut at Interlakes (now Lake County) Speedway where, in his own words years later, "I

passed a bunch of cars in the first turn on the first lap and I was going to show them how good a driver I was. I forgot about the open pit gate on the backstretch and I hit it a ton and flipped and flipped and completely destroyed my first good ride in a half lap”. But he got more good rides and starting finishing in the top of the order running against Hall of Famers Jim Matthews, Bill Mellenberndt, Earl Thomas and Harry Torgerson. In 1970 he teamed with Jack Mader and the blue #99 supermodified was the class of the field. Roger won the 1970 supermodified title in the car and also made his first sprint car appearance at Knoxville late that season. In his own words again on his initial Knoxville race he said “actually I was scared to death thinking of running at Knoxville, I was sure I would be last and the end of the first lap”. Roger finished in sixth position in his first Knoxville feature. He moved to Solomon, Kansas to start a business and be closer to the mainstream of sprint car racing. He ran the old IMCA circuit, the fair dates, open shows and made it back to Knoxville every Saturday night. Hearing of the tough Pennsylvania circuit and three and four nights of racing, Roger moved to Emigh, Pennsylvania and competed at Williams Grove, Selingsgrove, Port Royal and Reading against the likes Jan Opperman, Kenny Weld and Steve Smith. When Opperman vacated the famous Bogar #99, Larson ran the car for a spell until a USAC Reading flip earned him the pink slip. He also spent some seat time in Al Hamilton’s #77 before returning back home to South Dakota. In 1976 Roger drove a new Trostle for Dale Hanisch and won the sprint car championships at Jackson, Minnesota and the old Hartford, half mile, Speedway as well as features at Fairmont, Rapid City and Knoxville. Roger assembled a new team for the 1979 season and competed with the World of Outlaws, the National Speedway Contest Association and ran both Knoxville and Hartford. In July of that fateful season, Roger lost his life in a crash at Knoxville that also claimed Daryl Dawley. Roger Larson was inducted into the Knoxville Raceway Hall of Fame a few years ago and tonight he is enshrined into the Huset Speedway Hall of Fame.

BOB LUKES

Modified stock car racing in the 1950’s was motorized madness at best. There were no move over flags, pit stewards or safety crews, it was bump and run, slide and stick ‘em in the wall and fight your way out of the pits after the races. The drivers of that era were WWII and Korean War veterans, farm boys, back alley mechanics and all thought they could outdrive, outwhup and outdrink anybody any day of the week and twice on Sundays. Bob Lukes was the epitome of the early day stock car drivers. Bob, along with his brothers Leo, Arnie and Don who formed a four car team of 1938 Chevrolet coupes, started his career at the old Soo Speedway on the 6th of June, 1954. Bob, who usually ran his own car but did drive for Mel DeYoung, Don Hood, Joe Clark and Bill Leesch among others, won his first feature race at Husets in 1955. He won the Huset modified stock car championship in 1958 (the first year points were kept at Husets) after a season long battle with Hall of Famer Arnie Nimmerfroh. In 1958 he won the South Dakota State Fair Championship on a Sunday afternoon and towed to Husets for the Sunday nighter where he finished second to Nimmerfroh and in September won the Spencer, Iowa Fair. He was especially strong on the half milers winning the Sioux Empire Fair three years in a row, twice at Huron and four feature wins at Jackson, Minnesota as well as the win at Spencer. He also survived some hellish spills including a 1959 crunch at Husets. Running behind Hall of Famer Gil Haugan on the last lap, Bob drifted high off the

second bend for a run at Haugan and clipped the wall with his right rear tire. The Chevrolet coupe flipped, bounced and rolled down the back chute coming to rest upside down in front of the pit gate. He walked away from the wreckage but admitted later “hell man, I didn’t know where I was until Wednesday”. He also rode out a nasty front chute end over end at the Sioux Empire Fairgrounds that left him with some re-arranged ribs. Bob was a “life is short, let’s have fun” guy and definately a free spirit. He once swept the program at Jackson winning his heat, the dash and feature and earned over \$400 in cash. Following a stop at the Jackson VFW club and a late night Minnesota steak house, he had to borrow \$20 the next night to get in the Huset pits, saying only “boy we really had some fun last night didn’t we”. He once was towing his ‘38 Chevrolet coupe down I-90 and the pickup truck tow rig broke down just east of Mitchell. He unhooked the coupe, tossed in a couple of tires and his tool box and DROVE the race car down the Interstate to get to Husets in time for hot laps. Bob ran in competition for the last time during the 1972 season. He drove the Bill Leesch #1 supermodified and drove his final race on the 6th of August finishing second to Hall of Famer Harry Torgerson. Bob later moved to Phoenix, Arizona and passed away a few years ago. Bob Lukes was truly a pioneer in the early days of Husets Speedway.