

## **2011 Huset's Speedway Hall of Fame Inductees:**

- *Jim Haney*
- *Vern Haugan*
- *Bill Rook*
- *Roger Swenson*
- *Tom Van Anne*

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## **2011 HUSET'S SPEEDWAY HALL OF FAME**

*Bios written by Rob Ristesund*

### **JIM HANEY**

Haney has been active in regional racing as a driver, car owner and crewman for seven decades.

Haney first became involved in the sport as a teenager in 1956 as a crewman for Watertown neighbor and future Huset's Hall of Fame member Marv DeWall. Haney began driving in the Street Stock class in Watertown in 1962 and five years later he competed in a Super-Modified at Huset's as a teammate with Roger Swenson.

In an era when feature lineups were complete inversions of total points – the car with the lowest amount of points started in front on the D Feature and the highest- point car started in back of the "A" – Haney became the first driver to win a D, C, B and A feature in the same season.

After driving with Swenson for several seasons, Haney raced his own car for a time at area tracks before driving for Hall of Fame member Harold Krull from 1975 to 1979. In 1978, he achieved a rare feat when he won the Saturday morning feature at the South Dakota State Fair and came back to repeat the win in the afternoon session.

Haney eventually retired from driving and became a car owner for a number of drivers. His most successful stint with a driver was with his son-in-law, Terry Reilly, that began in 1988 in a modified before they moved to a 360 Sprint Car in 1993.

Haney left racing as a car owner in 2001, but he remains active in the sport today as a crewman on Les Schoon's modified.

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### **VERN HAUGAN**

Vern Haugan was a premier racing mechanic and craftsman whose Chrysler-powered cars had highly successful results on the track.

Haugan teamed with his brother, Gil, first at Soo Speedway near Sioux Falls in 1955. The pair won the championship in their second season and went on to win track championships and numerous features at Huset's and Jackson, Minn.

In 1962, the brothers bought a '61 Plymouth Late Model from Lee and Richard Petty and competed on the I.M.C.A. circuit for the next two seasons.

After Gil elected to retire from racing following the 1963 season to devote more time to his growing construction business, the familiar red-and-white No. 4 modified returned to the local racing scene in 1965 with Vern turning the wrenches.

The car was always one of the machines to beat at every race, with a number of notable drivers – including Daytona 500 winner Tiny Lund and Hall of Famer Roger Larson – behind the wheel.

Vern then teamed with his son, Mike, as driver in 1970 and the pair began competing with the Plymouth formerly driven by Gil and later with a Plymouth 'Cuda, enjoying success in racing throughout the Tri-State area.

After Mike retired from driving, Vern's final involvement in racing came in the early 1980s helping his younger son, Dave, with his street stock.

In an era when few racing parts were available for purchase, Vern's skills as a mechanic and craftsman were invaluable as he fabricated parts from bare steel or modified pieces found in junkyards.

Vern remained a fan of racing the remainder of his life and utilized his automotive skills in restoring a number of antique cars until he passed away in 2010.

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## **BILL ROOK**

Bill Rook was a Huset's Speedway champion and top area sprint car driver before losing his life in an accident at Huset's at the age of 32.

Rook's skills of driving a race car were evident early in his career when he won the 1977 street stock championship in his first full year of racing at Lake County Speedway near his home in Madison. The next year, he moved up to the six-cylinder modified class where he was a top competitor as well.

Rook took the wheel of a sprint car for the first time in 1980, driving for Huset's Hall of Fame member Harold Krull and finished sixth in points at Huset's. The following year, Rook and his family put together their own 360 sprint car team.

While the Rooks fielded a solid racing operation, their success reached a higher level when they began a close relationship with Hall of Fame member Loren Woodke and his son, Bryan, in 1985. They won the '85 and '86 points titles at Madison and the '86 championship at Huset's, as well as the '86 Jackson Nationals title with the aid of the Woodkes.

Rook appeared poised to enjoy a long and successful racing career due to his desire and talent prior to the Sunday evening race at Huset's on June 17, 1987.

But that night, Rook's car flipped over the backstretch wall on the final lap of the feature. The accident took his life and that of track worker Dennis Grave. Bill Rook left behind his wife, Barb, and son, Brandon.

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## **ROGER SWENSON**

Roger Swenson is a Huset's champion who went on to record one of the greatest driving careers in South Dakota auto racing.

Swenson began racing in 1955 at the age of 17 in Milbank, before racing at his home track in Watertown the following season. In the 1960s he began making the weekly trip to Huset's and won the track's super-modified title there in 1966, winning the championship on the last lap of the final race over Hall of Fame member Earl Thomas.

With interest waning in open-wheel racing at tracks around his home in Watertown, Swenson switched to racing late models in 1972. His success on the track didn't skip a beat as he quickly became a dominant driver in the class at tracks in that area of the state.

By the time he hung up his helmet for the final time in 2004, he had scored hundreds of feature wins at tracks throughout the area. And while he didn't race for points titles for most of his career, he still scored multiple championships at speedways in Aberdeen, Madison and Watertown, in addition to his title at Huset's.

He achieved a major milestone in 2002 when he won his 100th feature at Watertown's Casino Speedway.

Swenson's cars were not only fast but they were among the best-appearing as well, as he felt that one of the best ways to represent his sponsors was with a nice-looking and clean car. His cars won first place in every car show they were entered.

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## **TOM VAN ANNE**

Tom Van Anne was an employee at Huset's for 40 years and spent about 20 years directing the track's racing program.

Van Anne was born into auto racing as his father, Bob, promoted races in Rock Rapids, Iowa, and later at Soo Speedway before passing away when Tom was 12.

At the age of 17, Tom introduced himself to Huset's manager Fred Buckmiller, who had known Tom's father well. Buckmiller offered him a part-time position at the track doing odd jobs such as picking up trash and mowing the grass.

Soon Van Anne began to fill in when there was a need for an extra official and eventually became a full-time member of the officiating crew.

He worked not only at Huset's but at a number of other tracks where Huset's promoted special events, including Aberdeen, Huron, Parker, Vermillion, Minot, N.D., and Spencer, Iowa. He also spent time as the flagman at speedways in Madison, Rock Rapids, Iowa, and Jackson, Minn.

Van Anne eventually became the director of the Huset's racing program, a position he held until his retirement in 2008.

Under his guidance, the track gained a reputation for running a swift and efficient racing program. While faced with frequently making difficult decisions, he earned the respect of the competitors and his fellow officials with his dedication to the task.