

BERT EMICK

Bert Emick was born on September 6, 1940, in Columbus, Ohio, the son of Betty and Bert "Pop" Emick, Sr.

"Pop" enjoyed racing photography as a hobby since the 1930's, covering the open-wheel racing action at places like Powell and Greenville, Ohio; and Rockville, Indiana. It isn't surprising that young Bert became a racing photo-journalist, too, by the time he was in his early twenties. He also participated in high school basketball and track & field.

In 1960, following graduation from South High School, the young gas station attendant met East cheerleader Brigitte, who had grown up in Eastern Europe and lived in the Austrian Alps until her family emigrated to Columbus in 1957.

They married in 1962 and had a daughter Kristi, born in 1964. Brigitte worked at General Electric Company, while Bert continued moving up in the automobile service industry. After a brief stint as a manager of the Able Tire Center in Albany, New York, Bert brought Brigitte back home to Columbus in the late 1960's. After working for Sears and Midas, Bert bought his own muffler shop in 1975, which he grew into quite a successful operation.

Because of Bert's upbringing, the Emicks were regulars at races in Ohio and the surrounding states in the Sixties and Seventies. The United States Auto Club (USAC) and the International Motor Contest Association (IMCA) were the dominant sanctioning bodies in the sport, but local \$500-to-win open-competition supermodified/super-sprint racing was also growing at a rapid pace. In fact, the Emick family had racing photo stands at both the St. Clairsville, Ohio and Morgantown, West Virginia, tracks in the mid - to late '70s.

The All Star Circuit of Champions (ASCoC) was formed in 1970 by C.H. "Bud" Miller of Sharon, Pennsylvania, with partners Paul Waite, William Baieri and George Yobe. Eleven races were run in 1970, mostly 100-lappers on Wednesday nights in New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, with each paying \$1,000 to win. Promoters such as Jack Gunn at Williams Grove and Selinsgrove, Wellman Lehman at Wayne County, and Don Martin at Lernerville were all involved. Ralph Quarterston won the first ASCoC point title over Bobby Allen, Lee Osborne and Lou Blaney.

ty in 1987. The late model series, however, declined in the early 1990's before being disbanded altogether in 1993. Dunn, Ray Godsey, Donnie Moran, Charlie Swartz, Billy Moyer, the late Jack Boggs, Jeff Purvis and Rodney Combs were all major winners in the proud history of ASCoC late model competition.

The All Star sprint series has also grown slowly, but surely, increasing from 33 events in 1981 to an all-time high of 81 races in 1995. In 1983, the Ohio Sprint Speedweek was started, featuring six races in six nights. The ultra-successful promotion, the brainchild of Eldora's Earl Baltes, has been imitated in a number of other regions and by a number of other sanctions over the years, no doubt flattering the All Stars and the Emicks.

The \$25,000 first place prize money at the All Star show at Pennsboro, West Virginia, in 1983 was also a record at that point in time. Bobby Allen, a veteran All Star competitor, won that one-time special event. However, more important is the fact that the All Stars continued to increase their regular event purses. That winner's share has increased over the years, from \$1,500 in 1979, to \$2,000 in 1980, to \$3,000 in 1985, to \$4,000 in 1987, and to \$5,000 in 1998.

The total purses had also grown, from \$10,000 in 1979 to a one-day All Star event purse today paying \$26,000. Corporate investments from the Club anti-theft device, United Expressline trailers, Frigidaire, and the many associate point fund and product sponsors have greatly helped the All Stars throughout the years. This year, GM Powertrain, Commercial Truck & Trailer, and TW Metals have all signed on to support the sport through the All Stars. And much of the credit for securing and maintaining the sponsorships belongs to Brigitte. Said Bert, "It's a pity. She doesn't begin to receive the credit she deserves. I couldn't come close to running the All Stars without her."

Due to Miller's business commitments, no races were run in 1971 or '72, however another eleven shows were scheduled in 1973. Jan Opperman won the title that year after competing in ASCoC sanctioned events in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Kansas (Topeka), Iowa (Knoxville) and Arizona (Manzanita). Ralph Parkinson, Jr., Bobby Allen and Rick Ferkel completed the top four in points.

Because of the success of the original All Star Circuit tours in 1970 and '73, and the renewed enthusiasm in 'outlaw' sprint car racing generated by Ted Johnson's World of Outlaws (WoO) point series in 1978, racing photographer friends Jerry Clum and Bert Emick decided to start their own series in 1979. Five events, under the Midwest Outlaw Super Series (Moss) banner, were held in Ohio and West Virginia with Dub May winning the point title over Jim Linder, George Harbour and Bobby Allen.

Emick got involved because of his admiration for the grass-roots, low budget traveling racers. Said Bert, "There had to be a way to help those guys... to provide them with good purses and enable them to run closer to home. A lot of those guys had regular jobs and we had to work around those situations. I'd wanted to provide them a place where they could make a little money in this very expensive sport. I thought that the sport would be in real trouble if such an organization didn't exist."

In 1980, Emick's MOSS sanctioning body was doing something right for the racers, promoters and fans, as it grew by leaps and bounds. According to Bert, who sold his muffler shop in '80, "That year, I contacted more tracks and we put together a pretty decent schedule. We ran 22 sprint shows and 15 late model events."

MOSS events paid \$2,000 to win in '80, with the sprint car point titlist earning an astounding \$10,000 for the championship. Bobby Allen, Jack Hewitt, Al Hager, Johnny Beaber and Rick Ferkel were the top five in sprint points that year, while the late Jim Dunn claimed the late model title.

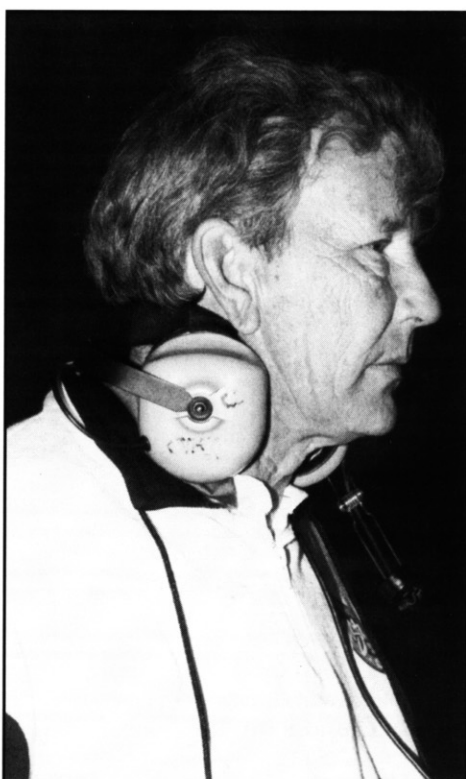
Despite a solid beginning in 1979-80, Emick soon faced some unexpected legal problems. Said he, "After such a successful start for the MOSS organization, there was a promoter from Southern Ohio Speedway who had booked MOSS events in 1980, and without our knowledge, copyrighted the name out from under us. After an unsuccessful battle in

Besides Brigitte doing the statistics, financials and souvenir sales, Bert has also amassed a solid team of officials over the years including Rick Nichols, Jimmy Darley, Bill "Barney" Lyle, videographer Jeff Kristensen and publicist Scott Hall. And, today, the All Star board includes the hard-working Emicks, promoter Earl Baltes and veteran publicist/promoter/official Jean Lynch. Through their efforts, the All Star Circuit of Champions schedule has also evolved over the past twenty years. 1983 marked the start of their annual February pilgrimage to Florida during Speedweeks. The Labor Day Sharon Nationals, the early August Eldora Nationals (now the three-day Historical Big One), and the Hoosier Fall Classic at Lawrenceburg have all become yearly events on the All Star calendar.

However, with increased schedules and purses come increased costs, especially in this era of high technology. According to a worried-looking Emick, "I can see from traveling with these guys just how tough it is to be an 'outlaw'. I can see the cost of equipment. I lived with the guys. I felt for them when an engine broke. I suppose as a promoter I shouldn't get so close to them, but it's something I can't help. I'm not above any of them. They're just a part of my life. I feel like I'm doing this for the racers. That's who my bosses are."

Clearly that sincere personal conviction rings true with the team, too. According to Dave Blaney, "Bert's too nice a guy for that tough job. He tries to please everybody, and that's just not possible in this business. He's the kind of man we need in racing today. Too bad there aren't more like him around."

And it's his relationships with the drivers, owners and mechanics, especially those at the start of their careers, that keeps Bert Emick satisfied. All Star regulars, through the years, have included Bobby Allen, Jack Hewitt, Rick Ferkei, Danny



Bert Emick

Ken Coles Photos

court, we lost the MOSS name.

Not one to throw in the towel, especially when he feels he's fighting for what's right, Emick rededicated himself to the task at hand. He recalled, "After we lost the MOSS name, I was more determined than ever to go on. It really gave me the drive I needed."

Thus, the All Star Circuit of Champions moniker was dusted off and used again, starting in 1981, for both the sprint car and late model series. In addition, a Board of Governors was established, with Bert Emick named president. Others on the board included Earl Baltes of Eldora, Jean Lynch of Sharon, Bill Moore of St. Clairsville, Wellman Lehman of Wayne County, photographer-turned-videographer Jerry Clum and ASCoC founder "Bud" Miller.

With Bert Emick at the helm and Brigitte by his side, the All Star Circuit of Champions has grown tremendously from 1981 until present, yet the changes have been evolutionary in nature. In mid 1982, with sprint car series consuming more and more of his energies, Bert turned over the day-to-day management of the ASCoC late model series to Bill Moore. That series would grow through the mid-1980's with its outlaw wedge-shaped topless cars, peaking in popularity

Smith, Lee Osborne, Fred Linder, 'Indiana Andy' Hillenburg, Dave Blaney, Jac Haudenschild, Steve Smith, Kenny Jacobs, Joe Gaerte, Rich Vogler, Steve Butler, Rocky Hodges, Brad Doty, Robbie Stanley, Terry Shepherd, Frankie Kerr, Kevin Huntley, Joey Saldana, Dale Blaney, Keith Kauffman and Sarah Fisher among others. Says Bert, "The most pleasant thing is to see the Dave Blaneys and the Jac Haudenschilds and the Brad Dotys come up with the All Stars and do as well as they have. Jeff Gordon is another pleasant memory for me. A lot of people don't realize that these guys ran All Star shows."

Emick, who now lives with Brigitte in a condo in Ponce Inlet, Florida, when they're not traveling, is well-respected within the sport of sprint car racing. He was the inaugural recipient of the National Sprint Car Poll's "Outstanding Contribution to the Sport Award" in 1985. He has also been ranked in the 'top five' in the 'Most Influential Leaders in the Sport' poll every year since its inception in 1991, along with fellow Hall of Famers Ted Johnson of the World of Outlaws, Ralph Capitani of Knoxville and Earl Baltes of Eldora. As for the money involved in being president of the All Star Circuit of Champions, Bert has often said, "I'm not in it for the money. Racing is like sex. I enjoy sex, but I never made any money at that either."

However, a more reflective Emick once noted, "You know, it doesn't make any difference to me what this job pays, I mean, I have to make a living like everybody else, but I don't make the kind of money a lot of other people make. But when I walk in the grandstands and people say, 'Great show, Bert,' that is worth more money than any promoter could pay."