

dave Argabright



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by Patrick Sullivan

Dave Argabright was born on October 22, 1955, and raised in rural Madison County, Indiana, on a farm situated between the burgs of Perkinsville and Frankton. His family was of modest means, but it was a unit where great affection could be found, along with an appreciation for hard work.

There was very little room for frills, so when his father took him to Anderson's Sun Valley Speedway as a young man, the experience was akin to that of a youth from a previous generation exposed to the circus for the very first time. Simply put, he was captivated by what he saw.

In an important turn of events, in 1968, the American Speed Association (ASA) began running sprint cars on Wednesday night and his brother-in-law, Randall Koons, invited him to tag along. At what we now deem Anderson Speedway, one sits right on top of the track and the sound and sights of sprint cars at speed can make your hair stand on end. Dave Argabright was hooked.

Understanding Dave's roots helps one truly understand what makes him tick to this day. Anderson Speedway was the home to men and women who toiled in the field and factories and looked to the simple high-banked quarter-mile oval as a break from the hard work of making ends meet. You could come out and see your workmate in a car known as "Detroit Iron" or really put the bit between

as his career unfolded and as he got the opportunity to rub shoulders with the greats in our sport and the entertainment world, he has never lost his love nor appreciation for the weekend warrior who cobbles something together that looks like a race car and heads to the track to compete.

It was while selling insurance that he had a chance meeting with Kevin Lane, the sports editor of the *Anderson Herald* newspaper. Dave mentioned that he had written for his high school newspaper and Lane immediately asked if he would help them out as a part-time stringer covering high school sports in the area. The pay was just \$15 per story, but Dave could use the money. More importantly, it allowed him to pursue a dream. He took the plunge and, before long, the name Dave Argabright was appearing as a byline for the local paper.

Like many of us, Dave was thrilled when he saw something new on the newsstand and at the racetrack devoted to the sport we love – *Open Wheel* magazine. He desperately wanted to be a part of this exciting new endeavor and, by 1981, he had submitted his first story to the magazine's editor, Dick Berggren. He asked for feedback and he got it. Dave says that the story came back "covered with so much red ink that it hurt my eyes. At first I was upset, but after a couple of days I took his suggestions to heart and rewrote the stories. He was ultimately a great help because his corrections helped me understand where my writing was weak."

Persevering, in February of 1983, his first story appeared in *Open Wheel*, a profile of a man he truly enjoyed: Chuck Amati. Soon he was writing a weekly column for the *Herald* titled "Track Talk," which ultimately led to more travel and more exposure to the world of auto racing.

In so many ways, Argabright has always drawn upon the interpersonal skills he honed in the world of sales, and while on the road he would often stop by the offices of Chris Economaki's *National Speed Sport News*, then located in Ridgewood, New Jersey. In 1987, the late Jerry Gappens and Keith Waltz proposed that Dave write a regular column for the popular paper.

Thus, in January of 1988, the first installment of "Indiana Scene" was published. From this point forward, Dave's work has been read and appreciated by a national audience. Still, Dave felt he was in search of his unique voice and wished to take his work to a level where it would resonate with the reader at a deeper and more emotional level. In his mind, a column written about the passing of racing legend Rich Vogler was a key turning point in his career.

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changed to "American Scene" and, in 1992, he launched *RaceLine*. Drawing from 900-number technology, it allowed fans to access instant race results from around the United States before interest in the internet gained steam.

In this same period, Argabright made some of his first appearances on television, first covering his beloved Little 500 sprint car race at the Anderson Speedway in 1990, followed by an update show produced by the late George Wilkins. Before long, he would become a regular television voice for a variety of networks – a role he continues in to this day. Dave was also active at the Indianapolis 500, serving as a reporter with Indianapolis Motor Speedway (IMS) Radio from 2004 to '10.

In 1998, Dave made a gutsy move, he walked away from a successful career in sales and decided to devote his entire career to motorsports. Two important things happened. First, recognizing that it would be difficult to survive as a freelance writer, he approached a popular former racer with a book proposal. The result was the publication of the hugely successful "Still Wide Open" book on the life of Brad Doty. On the heels of this success, in 2000, Dave was hired by Turner Network Television (TNT) for broadcasts of the World of Outlaws (WoO).

In spite of his success on television, there seems little doubt that he has made his strongest connection with fans in his role as a writer. In late 1999, he took a full-time position as associate editor of *Open Wheel* magazine. When this magazine's popular run was ended, he worked with *National Speed Sport News* publisher Bill Handy to launch a new supplemental section called "Elbows Up." Yet, before long he was back working side-by-side with Doug Auld when *Sprint Car & Midget* magazine debuted in early 2002. Since that time, Argabright has contributed countless stories to the magazine and writes a regular column.

In addition to all of his work on television and in magazines and newspapers, he has turned out an impressive array of books. He collaborated with Jack Hewitt on his autobiography, "Hewitt's Law" (2003), followed by "EARL!" with Earl Baltes (2004); "Let 'Em All Go!" with Chris Economaki (2006); "Lone Wolf" with Doug Wolfgang (2007); "Fast Company" with D. William 'Speedy Bill' Smith (2009); and "Let's Go Racing!" with Rex Robbins (2013).

At the urging of Doug Auld, he created a fictional series that first appeared in *Sprint Car & Midget* magazine in 2005 called "The Best of Times." The series was well-received and continues to this day, spanning over 100 monthly episodes in the magazine. The adventures of Jimmy Wilson and friends has also been adapted to a book format with the introduction of the hardcover volume "Sprint Car Salvation" in 2011, followed by "Fast and Fearless" and "Sprint Car Showdown."

In many respects, the true testimony to the quality of his work is reflected in the number of awards and honors he has received.

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their teeth and white-knuckle it on the figure-8 course. These were normal everyday people, just like Dave and his family. After high school, he worked in a gas station, glass factory, and as a delivery truck driver for United Parcel Service (UPS), before eventually moving to the world of sales. Thus,



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He has been deemed "Media Member of the Year" six times by the National Sprint Car Poll and, in 2001, received the "Outstanding Contribution to the Sport Award." That same year, he was honored with the "Frank Blunk Award for Journalism" from the Eastern Motorsports Press Association (EMPA).

Dave has also received the "Bloys Britt Writing Award" in 2008 from the American Auto Racing Writers & Broadcasters Association (AARWBA), the "Dymag Award of Journalism Excellence," the "Gene Powlen Fan Appreciation Award" from the Hoosier Auto Racing Fans (HARF) and the HARF "Media Member of the Year" award.

In addition, Dave has been inducted into the Hoosier Auto Racing Fans (HARF) Hall of Fame, the Dayton Auto Racing Fans (DARF) Hall of Fame, the National Association of Auto Racing Fan Clubs (NAARFC) Hall of Fame and the Little 500 Hall of Fame. The latter award is particularly meaningful, given his long association with, and passion for, the Anderson Speedway. It also reflected his own over-twenty-year role with the Little 500 Hall of Fame.

Dave still calls Fishers, Indiana, home and is the father of four children, Joe, Jake, Amanda, and Chad. Like so many Hoosiers, his love of auto racing is only rivaled by his passion for high school basketball.

Today, he continues his active career as an automotive and motorsports writer with *National Speed Sport News*, *Sprint Car & Midget*, *Road & Track*, *Dick Berggren's Speedway Illustrated*, and *Car & Driver* magazines. He continues his television reporting work on such networks as Speed TV, Versus, CBS Sports Network, The Nashville Network (TNN), and the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN). He also continues to serve as a pit reporter for the television broadcasts of the MustSeeRacing Xtreme Sprint Series.

Finally, when Dave Argabright isn't writing nor spending time with his family and friends, he enjoys watching classic movies, listening to music, going to the gym, and tinkering with his 1969 Camaro.