

JOHN SAWYER

John Sawyer is being inducted into the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame in 1999 in honor of his outstanding achievements as a media member, including his having written the classic racing books "The Dusty Heroes", "Dialed In" and "No Time for Yesterday: Rich Vogler".

John Gardner Sawyer was born on July 19, 1936, in Cleveland (Ohio) to parents Warren and Lucy Sawyer of Marion (Ohio).

Warren was a medical doctor who specialized in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illnesses. In fact, Warren's grandfather was the private physician of United States President Warren G. Harding, who was from Marion. John grew up in a home on the 100-acre family property which included a farm and private mental hospital. He graduated from the Harding High School, and enjoyed attending dirt track races at the local Marion Fairgrounds.



John Sawyer

John Sawyer Collection

of the Old West and the Civil War, rodeo, baseball, trains, and collecting handmade antique guns and native American artifacts. Because of his family's close ties with President Harding, John has also had a keen interest in both politics and presidential memorabilia.

magazines and "National Speed Sport News" paper. He was also active as contributing editor for "Open Wheel".

"The Dusty Heroes", his first book, was the result of a four-year-long research and writing project.

It was published in 1978 by Carl Hungness Publishing of Speedway (Ind.). John dedicated the book to family friends George DeWolfe and Harold "Monk" McCurdy, who first introduced him to 'the glories of dirt track racing'.

John's second book, equally a classic amongst dirt track fans was Jan Opperman's story entitled "Dialed In". It was published in 1981 by Carl Hungness. The published works of Sawyer and fellow journalist Joe Scalzo defined the sport of sprint car racing for an entire generation of fans.

John graduated from Colorado College in 1961, after transferring from the University of Colorado. Later that year, John married Brenda Blake, whose father was an avid racing fan, too.

Sawyer has been a life-long follower of American open-cockpit automobile racing, and his wings spread far beyond the Marion half-mile where drivers Webb Arthur, Jim Hemmings, and Clark "Shorty" Templeman were fatally injured in 1961 and '62.

After little success as a driver of the open-wheel machines, John pursued his enthusiasm via the roles of mechanic, fan and journalist. He knew sprint car racing because he got to know the people involved: the drivers, the mechanics, the owners, the builders, the promoters, the sanctioning officials, the media members, and the fans. And by knowing it so intimately, he experienced a roller coaster of emotions: the highest of the highs, and the lowest of the lows.

John's other passions in life have been his studies

After college and some post-graduate work, John was certified to teach high school American history. He taught at Marion Catholic High School and was an exceptional educator, positively influencing the lives of many students. He was also a successful coach of high school baseball and football. In fact, to this day, John continues to keep in contact with many of his former history students from throughout his teaching and coaching career.

John, Brenda and their daughter Lisa, born in 1964, left Marion in '69 for Sarasota (Florida). There John taught and coached at Bishop Verot High School in Fort Myers, and was named "teacher of the year" in his first year. He also taught at St. Martha's Catholic School in Sarasota.

Since the early Seventies, John has produced hundreds of periodical articles, many of them relevant to sprint car racing subjects. He has been a frequent contributor to "Racing Cars", "Open Wheel" and "Cavalcade of Auto Racing"

Divorced from Brenda, John met and married Nancy Newcome in 1989. They still reside in Sarasota, where John is a glazier for a glass company.

His third book, "No Time for Yesterday" covering Rich Vogler's life, was published in 1996 by Hungness, with the help of Bob Daniels. John's articles and books on sprint car racing have clearly been labors of love by a man that has been passionate about the sport and its people since his early years of race-going in Ohio, Indiana and throughout the Midwest.