

RAY LEE GOODWIN

Ray Lee Goodwin is being inducted into the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame in 1999 in honor of his outstanding achievements as a driver, including his having won the 1968 Knoxville (Iowa) Nationals and the 1972 International Motor Contest Association (IMCA) point championship.

Raymond Lee Goodwin was born in Kansas City (Mo.) on February 1, 1940, to parents Phillip and Theresa Goodwin. Ray Lee had three older brothers: Phillip John (now deceased), James Martin, and Richard Paul.

Ray Lee grew up playing baseball, as a catcher, in school. However, when his older brother Jimmy started driving modifieds (coupes) around Kansas City and Ray Lee would tag along, he soon was hooked on racing.

He began his career as a 19-year-old rookie owner of a GMC-powered super-modified roadster at Olympic Stadium in Kansas City in 1959. He owned it because, at that time, you had to be at least twenty years old to race. Jimmy drove it that season, as did Jim Hurtubise, and it was housed at Elmer Lane's garage. According to Goodwin, "Jim drove my roadster twice and taught me set-up and all about weight distribution. He used welding rods to set the weight."

More importantly, though, Goodwin met Alice Jean Powell in 1959 and they married in late '61. Says Ray Lee; "Alice taught me about love and life, and she's been at my side ever since."

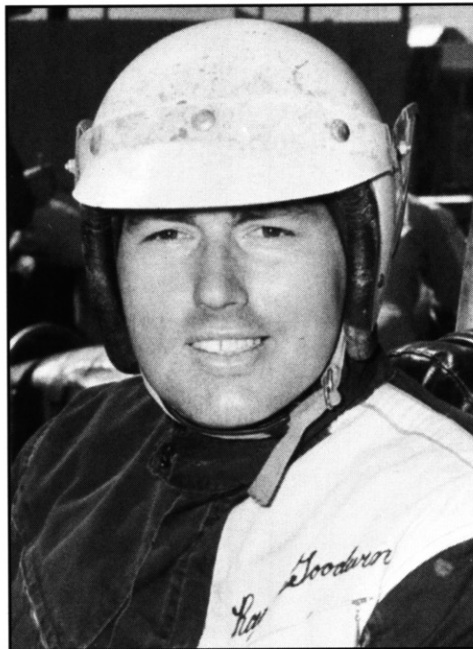
Throughout the early Sixties, Goodwin raced primarily in the super-modified division at quarter-mile Kansas City tracks like Olympic and Riverside Stadium, and the half-mile Lakeside Speedway across the Missouri River in Kansas.

Wins started coming Goodwin's way in the mid-1960's, and he was crowned the Kansas City Auto Racing Club (KCARC) point champion in 1964, '65 and '66. 1966 was also the year he started traveling more, running seven IMCA events and posting a fourth place finish at Tampa (Fla.) during their Winter Nationals. He was the 1966 and '67 Kansas Jayhawk Association of Topeka (Ks.) point champion.

Ray Lee raced twenty races on the IMCA county and state fair circuit in 1967, finishing second in their finale in Tulsa (Okla.). Ray Lee worked for Goodyear Tire & Rubber, Chase Brass & Copper, and Consolidated Transfer & Leasing (as a heavy hauler until 1980) during those years.

During those years, too, Goodwin drove for a

number of the top super-modified and sprint car owners and mechanics in the Midwest, including Elmer Lane, "Junior" Hower, John "Duck" Corum,



Ray Lee Goodwin Bruce Craig Photos

Bill Sells, Luther Brewer and Jack Cunningham. He also raced against some of the toughest competition in the likes of Jerry, Kenny and Greg Weld, "Tiger Bob" Williams, Jay Woodside, Lloyd Beckman and Gordon Woolley.

In 1968, Ray Lee started driving for Charlie Williams and Charlie's son-in-law, Gary Swenson, in their number 24 machine. It was a combination of talented individuals from the Kansas City and Lincoln (Nebr.) racing hotbeds that stayed together for the remainder of Goodwin's career. In '68, they ran fifteen IMCA events, but their biggest win came in August at the prestigious Knoxville (Iowa) Super-Modified National Championship by leading all 30 laps and defeating Jerry Blundy and Earl Wagner.

The following year was another good year on the sprint car circuit for the team, winning 19 feature events and claiming the Eagle (Nebr.) point title. They won three events in two days at Knoxville, Belleville (Ks.) and Eagle, and they won a preliminary feature during the Knoxville Nationals.

Goodwin concentrated on Knoxville Raceway on Saturday nights in 1970, and he placed second in points to Joe Saldana. He also won numerous

events throughout the Midwest, including an IMCA date at the Clay County Fair in Spencer (Iowa).

Freddie Kain and Bob Trostle of Des Moines (Iowa) built a new sprinter in 1971 for Swenson and Williams, and the bright red number 24 machine would be known as "Big Red". The car and Goodwin were fast and they claimed many wins together, including another Knoxville Nationals prelim win and four IMCA wins: Sedalia (Mo.), twice at Lincoln, and Spencer. They tied Bob Kinser for seventh in IMCA points that year.

Goodwin, Williams, Swenson and "Big Red" went after the 1972 IMCA point championship and they won it convincingly over Chuck Amati, Dick Sutcliffe, Earl Wagner and Thad Doshier. They won two features at Eldon (Iowa) and Knoxville (Ill.) on the way to the title, and they won several other shows that year throughout the Iowa-Kansas-Nebraska region.

"Big Red" was sold in '73, but the team kept winning, including another Nationals preliminary feature at Knoxville. They won one IMCA main at Eldon and placed fourth in points behind Doshier in the Ricke & Hill (R&H) Farms number 40 machine, Gene Gennetten and Bill Utz.

During the mid-Seventies, Ray Lee drove for Hank Smith, Leroy Kallweit, and "Speedy Bill" Smith, with Gary Swenson wrenching. More wins came, but so did vicious backstretch accidents in 1974 and '75 at Knoxville, forcing an early retirement for Ray Lee.

Goodwin is also remembered by United States Auto Club (USAC) fans as a competitor with car owner Bob Lockard of Joliet (Ill.).

In 1979, Goodwin was a charter inductee into the Hall of Fame at Knoxville Raceway, a track in which he has 18 career feature wins. In 1980, Goodwin went to work for Belger Cartage as a heavy hauler, but he retired a decade later. Today, Ray Lee and Alice live in Polo (Mo.) on their farm. Their grown children are Steven and Ray Lee, Jr. In fact, Ray Lee Goodwin, Jr., is continuing a proud family tradition by winning sprint car races in America's Heartland while driving for Gary Swenson.