

NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

VERN "FLIP" FRITCH

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Born September 26, 1909, in New Lothrop (Michigan), Vern "Flip" Fritch later settled in Detroit until eventually moving to Florida. Early in life, Vern got involved with race cars and owned 'big cars', midgets and roadsters. The "Flipper" operated a racing drivers school for awhile, in addition to broadcasting on Detroit's radio station KABC.

Having owned race cars since the early 1930's, Fritch was no stranger to the dangers of racing when on October 9, 1949, he suffered a horrible accident at



Vern "Flip" Fritch

(Ed Hütze Photo)

Michigan's Owosso Speedway. Fortunate that he was not fatally injured, he was unfortunate enough to be permanently disabled for the balance of his life. The accident was the result of a blown radiator hose on the race car in front of him, with the other car spinning in his path. Fritch went over his axle and flipped sideways over and over, throwing him out on the track.

Although physically disabled, Vern's emotions soared as high as the heavens, not only for himself, but he went to work helping other disabled racing people by starting the "Disabled Drivers Pool". He steadfastly plugged the needs of injured drivers, collected funds and distributed them as needed. So, in place of feeling sorry for himself, he dedicated his life to assisting others in need. The "Flipper" had a favorite saying, "racing takes care of its own". One of his attributes, his sense of humor, manifested his great spirit and he kept on the the up beat. Even though he was confined to his wheelchair, he never would allow other people to assist him around and, at one time, Flip held the world's record (100.166 m.p.h.) for a hand-controlled car, set at Daytona Beach (Fla.).

Flip Fritch was also widely known for his writing in

several racing papers, including his famous column, "Round and Round". Helping new and aspiring writers break into the racing journalism field was high of Vern's list. Among those he helped in the beginning were Bill Seith, John Darveau and John Sawyer. In the Fifties, he received a "National Writers Award", which was presented to him on Detroit's WTVT television station.

Vern "Flip" Fritch passed away on August 7, 1978, in Riverview (Fla.). Vern, who loved dirt track racing was cremated and his ashes were placed at the East Bay Raceway in nearby Gibsonton.



Vern "Flip" Fritch

(Bruce Craig Photos)