

National Sprint Car Hall of Fame & Museum

TED HALIBRAND

Henry Theodore "Ted" Halibrand was born in 1916 in Paterson (NJ). It is not hard to imagine how he got bitten by the 'racing bug' at a young age, given the fact that legendary driver Ted Horn was basing his racing team out of Paterson's "Gasoline Alley" from the late 1930's until the start of World War II.

Halibrand moved to Southern California before the war, working as an engineer for the Douglas aircraft company. At the same time, he began tinkering with race cars, even owning his own midget. During the war, Halibrand travelled the world as a field service representative for Douglas.

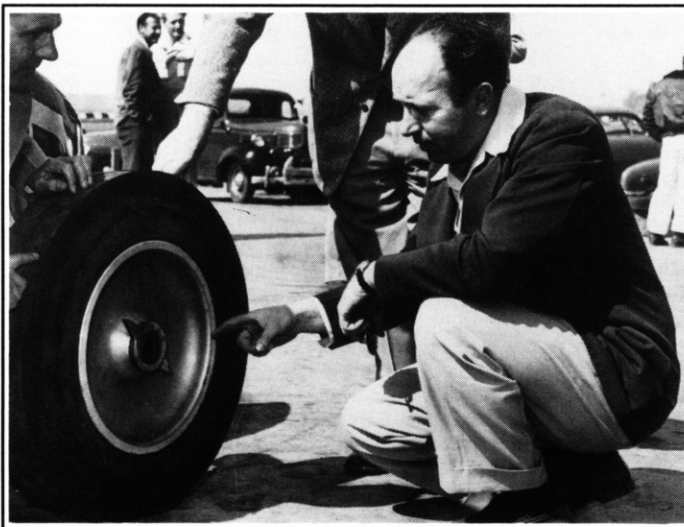
After the war, he continued running his Kurtis/Offenhauser midget at such venues as the Los Angeles Coliseum and Gilmore Stadium. Tony Bettenhausen even flew out from Chicago (IL) just to drive Ted's immaculate and potent midget. In 1947, Ted married Emma and began a family which would eventually include three daughters: Linda, Cheryl and Sandy.

At the same time, Halibrand began designing and manufacturing racing parts in Culver City (Calif.) under the name of Halibrand Engineering Company. His company has been a leader in component parts manufacturing since its inception. According to author Mark Dees, "His parts were the unseen, unsung strength of many a wonder car."

The quick-change rear-end is still going strong today in open-wheel racing and has basically had no major modifications of consequence for the last forty-five years. Ernie Locke of Fresno (CA) built one in small quantities in the mid-1940s and midget racer Duane "Pappy" Carter, Sr., took one down to Los Angeles and showed it to Halibrand, who was making racing car parts on the side. Halibrand put it into production, others copied it, and by 1950 it seemed everyone was using one with their hot rods. Early quick change manufacturers included Pat Warren, Clyde Adams, Ernie Casale, the Conze brothers and Jim Frankland, yet

Halibrand "quickies" set the design standard for the industry.

Ted Halibrand also gets most of the credit for cast magnesium racing wheels. The first of these new wheels worked well, but the talk in the pits was that the flexing of wire wheels was desirable and that magnesium wheels developed cracks or would catch fire in accidents. Halibrand brought some wheels to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in



Ted Halibrand

(Bruce Craig Collection)

1949, and one cracked example resulted in wholesale rejection. The problem was solved by 1950, which was the same year that Ted designed the simpler, cheaper pin-drive knock-off hub which remains standard for sprint cars to this day.

Halibrand's steering gears, wheel hubs and brake assemblies were similarly instrumental in the evolution of safety and performance in open-wheel motorsports. Goodyear-Hawley caliper or "spot" disc brakes were first used at Indy in 1951. Halibrand, working with Toby Cagle, came out with his own design shortly after and for years various Halibrand calipers, rotors and hats were standard wear on the Indy car.

Although Ted Halibrand was best known for the success of his products at the Indianapolis 500, it must be remembered the very same technology and structural integrity of his products were

included in the parts he supplied to the sprint car and championship dirt racers of the era. The prices of these components remained very affordable as a result of his efforts to keep the cost of maintaining a race car manageable. This held true not only for the Halibrand line of products, but his competitors as well. As soon as Ted decided that a competitor's price increase was too high for the average racer to absorb, he would revise his pricing to reflect what he thought was fair. It was interesting to notice that within a short time the rest of the industry would bring their pricing in line with Halibrand's pricing.

Yet, the high quality of the parts he produced for close to forty years stemmed from his love of racing, not from his desire for financial gain. Most people don't know that Ted helped many of his competitors by keeping them supplied with certain parts they needed but did not have the manufacturing capability to produce. Many never heard, either, of the untold number of checks that he sent to the families of drivers who had been killed or seriously injured. The checks, of substantial amounts, were never mailed or presented with great fanfare, but they always went out on the next business day after the incident appeared in Chris Economaki's *National Speed Sport News*.

His dedication to upgrading the safety of motorsports is legendary and it was for that he was named the inaugural recipient of the Continental Casualty Company-sponsored Safety Award for the greatest contribution to safety in 1956 (later renamed the Jack O'Neal Safety Award.) Halibrand Engineering won the award again in 1978.

Many of today's safety and rescue devices that are commonplace worldwide gained initial acceptance as a result of his chairmanship of the United States Auto Club (USAC) Safety Committee from 1968 through 1991. In 1983, Ted Halibrand was named recipient of the Eddie Edenburn Trophy, recognizing a lifetime of outstanding contributions to USAC racing. And in 1986, he received the Ross Hadley Memorial Achievement Award for dedication to USAC.

Ted Passed away on June 22, 1991.