

NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

GAYLORD WHITE

Gaylord White was born in Perry (Iowa) and moved to South Dakota at an early age. He was a graduate of the Iowa State College and was a varsity baseball player while there.



Gaylord White (Bill Haglund Collection)

For many years, Gaylord was a top-notch auto racing publicist. In 1941 he teamed with Al Sweeney to organize National Speedways, Inc. (NSI), and that partnership continued until Gaylord's death on March 15, 1954. Their first signed contract was for events held in South Dakota where the White family had been active in the State Fair and scheduling of automobile races. In that initial year, Al and Gaylord sanctioned races for the Central States Racing Association (CSRA) and had Emory Collins under contract after he left the J. Alex Sloan organization at the close of the 1940 racing season.

After World War II, National Speedways became licensed by the International Motor Contest Association (IMCA). Emory Collins continued to drive for National Speedways in 1946 and 1947, before moving to Frank Winkley's racing circuit in '48. Deb Snyder was crowned the National Speedways champion in 1948.

In 1946, Gene Van Winkle joined the NSI staff during events promoted at the Nebraska State Fair. By 1950, National Speedways had become the dominant promoting arm under the IMCA banner, with events at the prestigious Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas, Florida and Louisiana state fairs.

In fact, one of White's unique contributions to auto racing was the "Hawkeye Futurity" at Des Moines, one of the major annual 'big car' championships of its day. The event was planned in 1953 and the first one was set for June 5, 1955. Entry fees for the event were to be paid in six payments (\$5, \$5, \$10, \$10, \$20, and \$50), two per year, beginning on July 1, 1953. After each payment,

NSI would match the amount collected from entrants and put the money in an interest-bearing bank account. The first year it paid Jud Larson \$1,810 out of a total purse of \$9,100 for the 100-lap race. It generated a lot of excitement over the years amongst the teams and the fans and it is sad that Gaylord never saw the race that he had planned.

Gaylord was insistent at all times that races start as scheduled and that programs be kept moving at a brisk clip. Under his leadership, young drivers were encouraged to enter the 'big car' game. With the retirement of legends Jimmy Wilburn and Emory Collins, National Speedways developed new legends in the form of Bobby Grim, Jimmy Campbell, Bob Slater, Jud Larson and Don Branson. And Gaylord was always urging NSI dri-

vers to improve their equipment and present a sharp appearance to the public.

Late in 1953, Gaylord suffered a stroke, and although he was handicapped by a partial paralysis, his mind never dulled. He was still producing new promotional ideas and suggesting improvements for auto racing up until the day of his death from his home in Sioux Falls.

Auto racing lost one of its dearest friends with the death of Gaylord "Lefty" White. He will long be remembered by all those close to the great American sport.

