

NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

DON SMITH

Donald E. Smith, born in 1928, has been a lifelong resident of Terre Haute (Ind.). He was educated at Garfield High School, the Hill School in Pottstown (Penna.), Indiana University (Bloomington, Ind.) and Indiana State University in his native Terre Haute. Don, his wife Mary Frances and his daughters Virginia Smith and Sally Lowery all currently live in Terra Haute.

Don did not enter the banking business until 1969, when he was past the age of forty, and he is now President of Terre Haute First National Bank. Don also serves as Chairman of the Board of the First Financial Corporation, which includes several affiliate banks in the area. One of those affiliates is located in Sullivan (Ind.) and is directed by none other than former California Racing Association (CRA) and United States Auto Club (USAC) driver Bruce Walkup.

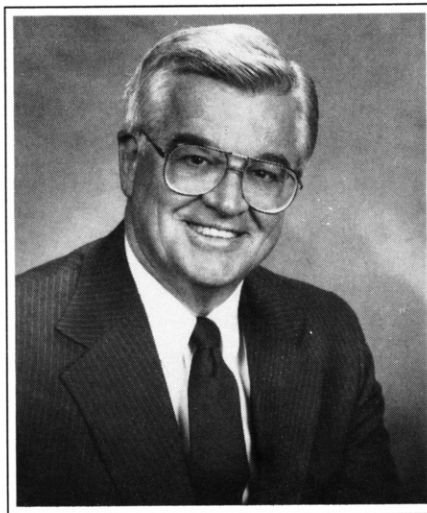
Smith has been very active in the years in both civic and philanthropic endeavors and serves on many boards. He's listed in "Who's Who in America", "Who's Who in the Midwest" and "Who's Who in Finance and Industry".

Don's racing interest began in 1941 when his uncle Uriah took him to the Indianapolis 500, and that was four years before fellow Terre Haute resident Anton "Tony" Hulman bought the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Tony's mother, Grace Smith Hulman, was Don's grandfather's sister. The Smith family mined bituminous coal from under the region's famous clay (it is a center of brick-making), while Don's father and Tony Hulman founded the R.J. Oil & Refining.

In 1948, a consortium of local investors, calling themselves the Wabash County Fair Association, built the Terre Haute Action Track on U.S. 41, one-half mile south of Interstate 70. It featured some of that same high-quality clay.

Joseph L. Quinn, the Bedford native who Hulman had hired as vice-president of the Terre Haute Gas Company, and who went on to become safety director of the Speedway and promoter at the

Indianapolis State Fairgrounds, asked 23-year old Don Smith to help line up the first American Automobile Association (AAA) sprint car program at Terre Haute. Although originally scheduled for November 4, 1951, it did not come off until June 15, 1952, opposite another AAA program at the Williams Grove Speedway. Frank Luptow did manage to set fast time (24.389 seconds) on that Sunday in June at Terre Haute in his



Donald E. Smith

Bardahl number nine sprinter.

Don's 'official' racing activities began in 1952 with the inception of the Sumar Racing Team. Chapman S. Root and Don formed the team, which was named after their wives, Sue and Mary, respectively. Sam Hanks drove it to a third place finish in '52, while Jimmy Daywalt grabbed a sixth the following year.

After dropping out of this team effort in 1953, he was Director of Competition at the Terre Haute Action Track from then until 1980. Both the prestigious "Hut Hundred", a 100-lap USAC midget event starting thirty-three cars, and rich "Hulman Classic", the premier non-winged USAC dirt-track sprint car event which recently celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1995, were conceived during this time. For ten years the Hulman Classic was cov-

ered by ABC "Wide World of Sports".

Also during his Action Track (so named by D.E. "Gene" Powlen) tenure, Smith created the annual Hulman Classic 'calcutta' charity benefit. With the good times came the bad, though, and those were the deaths of Stan Bowman (1962), Jackson Hagemeyer (1962) and Gary Congdon (1967) at Terre Haute. Through the years, Don Smith's father and Tony Hulman both made significant financial contributions to the Vigo County Fairgrounds facility in the Wabash Valley.

Don also served as Director of Racing at the Indianapolis State Fairgrounds from 1972 until 1980, succeeding Jo Quinn. He even promoted one race on September 15, 1957, at Frank Funk's Winchester Speedway.

Donald Smith is a former sponsor of the Delrose-Holt Championship Silver Crown car from 1980 until 1994, and has sponsored numerous other endeavors in both open wheel and stock car racing. He is a board member of the newly-formed Indy Racing League (IRL) and the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame & Museum Foundation, Inc.

He is also owner of "Donnieland" (as his kids call it), his own unique museum of racing cars and collectibles. In it, when not on display at the National Sprint Car Museum in Knoxville (Iowa) is Hector Honore's famed "Black Deuce", which was piloted to seven straight International Motor Contest Association (IMCA) by Bobby Grim of Coal City (Ind.) and Pete Folsie of Tampa (Fla.). Also owned by Smith are such gems as a Johnny Rutherford dirt car, a Steve Kinser/Karl Kinser Maxim sprinter, the Jim Hurtubise Sterling Plumbing championship car, a Roger McCluskey Indy Car, a George Snider-built A.J. Foyt sprinter, two Tim Delrose/Dale Holt dirt cars and, most recently, the Sammy Swindell Kodiak-sponsored Challenger.

"I'm kind of proud of this place. Like I said, this is my 'golf game': coming out here and messing around. I'm here every weekend. It's the memories, I guess. Most of these fellows aren't living. It was part of their life, and part of mine. Part of our lives together."