

# NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

## TROY RUTTMAN

Ralph and Mary Ruttman were married in 1929 and lived in Mooreland (Okla.). They had four sons: Troy (born March 11, 1930), Jerry, Jimmy and Joe. Deep in the heart of dust bowl country during the Great Depression, the family moved to Pampa (Texas) when Troy was six months old and to Lynnwood (Calif.) in 1936. Times were tough for the Ruttman family until the Second World War, when Ralph "Pop" Ruttman got a decent pipe welding and pipe fitting job. The elder Ruttman suffered a serious work-related accident, though, in 1943 that bothered him for the rest of his life.

At age fifteen in 1945, Troy and "Pop" went to the Ash Can Derby at the Gate City Speedway in San Bernardino. Using his cousin's birth certificate and his father's permission, Troy entered the hot rod event and won "a ton of money" (\$26). Pop Ruttman turned the wrenches on his son's car when Troy turned to racing as a means to making a living for the family.

The following year, Troy went to see race organizer J.C. Agajanian, who was about to host the newly-formed California Roadster Association (CRA) at the Carrell Speedway (built in 1936 by Emmett J. Malloy). "Aggie" needed help attracting the hot rodders, so a deal was struck whereby an underage Ruttman could compete in the CRA event. That Labor Day, 1946, Ruttman earned \$630 for a fourth place in his Dad's Model A, competing against the likes of Jack McGrath, Manny Ayulo, Jim

Rathmann and Joe & Walt James.

In 1947, Troy drove Del Baxter's track roadster to the CRA point title in only the second year of the club's existence. The following year, aboard Bert Letner's roadster, Troy won the CRA title again.

During the late 1940s, the pressure from succeeding so quickly in both midgets and roadsters took its toll on young Ruttman. He was racing most nights of the week and, due to the constant tension of being underage and being under intense scrutiny by the media, soon developed ulcers.

Troy's life exploded in early 1949 when he married Beverly Brinkley and then was offered a ride in an ex-Indianapolis 500 winning mount (from 1941). During May, Ruttman and Bob Pankratz towed the black Malloy Offy sprinter to the Midwest for an American Automobile Association (AAA) 'big car' date at Salem (Ind.). He dusted off the midwesterners and easterners that day with slick tires that he grooved a special way. More importantly, he began developing his reputation as 'king of the high banks': Dayton (Ohio), Fort Wayne, Salem and Winchester (Ind.). Following his first Indy 500, a twelfth place finish, "Rutt" continued terrorizing the AAA circuit in the Midwest in 1949.

Troy's rival on the high banked tracks was Duane Carter (Sr.), the man who bought the Clyde Adams-built Malloy car and added Miracle Power sponsorship to it. According to Carter, "We both had good (appearance) deals," meaning they might receive \$500 each just to

show up. Carter, in the Eddie Kuzma-built Agajanian Special number 98 Jr., won the 1950 AAA Midwest championship with Ruttman second in the Malloy Special. A year later they switched rides and Ruttman won the same title with "Pappy" Carter second, thus Troy became the youngest champion in AAA history. The Carter-Ruttman rivalry became so heated by 1951 that both refused to time trial before the other. Thus, AAA official Russ Clendenen struck a compromise - each would time first every other week.

Ruttman won both the Midwest and the Pacific Coast AAA titles that season, although he did not finish at Indy in Aggie's car, which was very disappointing especially after his 15th place finish in 1950.

However, all that changed in '52 when Ruttman won the Indianapolis 500 aboard J.C. Agajanian's famed number 98. Although J.C. wanted Troy to curtail his sprint car efforts that year in favor of the championship cars, Ruttman chose otherwise. Although he won the AAA West Coast title again in 1952, he seriously injured his right arm at Cedar Rapids (Iowa) in August. After suffering that injury, Troy Ruttman never achieved the level of success that he had attained previously and he retired from motor-sports on July 19, 1964.

Today, Troy lives in Venice (Fla.) with his wife Clara. His brother, Joe Ruttman, continues the family tradition by competing in the NASCAR Winston Cup Series. Troy was selected to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Hall of Fame in 1992.