

NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

TOMMY MILTON

by Dick Wallen

Congenitally blind in one eye and with two-thirds normal vision in the other, Tommy Milton was sharp-tempered, sharp-tongued and extremely intelligent. He was also a master technician, and a holy terror on the race tracks where he drove as much with his head as with his foot. In 1918, Barney Oldfield befriended rookie Milton at Ascot Park. Not long after that, Milton won Indianapolis twice (1921 & 1923), was National Champion twice (1920-21), was a participant in 73 board track races, won 12 major victories and was in the first five on 43 occasions. Although Milton's family was wealthy, he emerged on the ruddy dirt tracks of the International Motor Contest Association (IMCA) driving the family's old Mercer that he modified himself. His IMCA success led him to AAA and a chance to drive one of the four-cylinder walking beam Duesenbergs with which he became a master of the dirt tracks, the boards and the bricks of Indianapolis. Determined to set a new world's land speed record, he did so with a 16-cylinder Duesenberg, largely of his own design, at Daytona Beach in 1920. Milton's knack for spotting future talent was responsible for advancing the careers of Jimmy Murphy and Bob McDonough. After Milton's near-total retirement from driving at the end of 1925, he remained with the sport at the request of Wilbur Shaw, and became chief steward at Indianapolis for many years.

Tommy Milton is survived by his grandson Tom Milton III of Huntington Beach, California.



Tommy Milton
Bruce Craig Collection