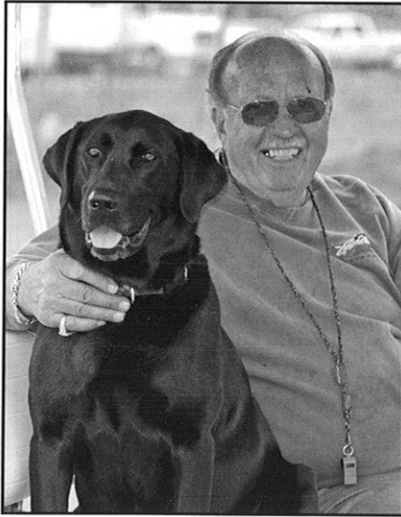


Brian Simonseth Photo



John Padjen

by Troy Hennig

Speed and horsepower has always been a part of promoter John Padjen's life. When Padjen turned 18 years old he was hired as an electrician for Southern Pacific Railroad. He worked 42 years for the railroad until he retired in 1994. "I guess you could say I have always been fascinated with things that go fast," said Padjen.

In 1962, Padjen began his first involvement with racing as a pit gate steward at

Auburn Speedway. "I saw a lot of con artists in my days running the pit gates," said Padjen with a smile.

In 1973 Gene Welch approached Padjen about going in as partners to promote West Capitol Raceway in West Sacramento. Padjen accepted and began his career as one of the most successful West Coast promoters of our time. Now, 35 years later, Padjen is now being inducted into the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame. "This is a crowning moment for me and my family," said Padjen. "My wife, Robbie, and our children and our families have been the reason for my success," said Padjen.

In 1978, West Capitol closed and Padjen relocated to his current home at Silver Dollar Speedway in Chico. The biggest attraction for this famed quarter-mile speedway is the Gold Cup Race of Champions. This four-day event attracts racers and fans from all over the world. Nearly 100 sprint cars compete during the Thursday, Friday and Saturday night race. On Wednesday night the Pacific Sprint Cup host the top 32 in points from the Civil War Series. John Padjen Motorsports (JPM) also is in charge of the California Civil War Series. This series is the top traveling winged 360-cubic-inch sprint car series in California.

The Golden State Challenge 410-cubic inch sprint car series is also a JPM enterprise. It is also the only winged '410' sprint car series that travels in California. On Friday nights at Chico, Padjen is the only promoter to have a weekly '410' sprint car racing program in California.

John Padjen Motorsports also promotes Placerville Speedway. His son Alan is in charge of the daily duties. Family members are a big reason that JPM has survived for so long. His daughter Johna works at the office in Roseville. Alan's wife Diane worked in the office and helps at both the Placerville and Silver Dollar speedways. John's niece Cindy is the scorekeeper at both Chico and Placerville. Along with Aron, her boyfriend, they both also are in charge of the website www.johnpadjenmotorsports.com. Another niece, two nephews and a granddaughter also help to make John Padjen Motorsports run as smoothly as it can.

Padjen has received his fair share of accolades in the past. He has been inducted into the Chico Sports Hall of Fame and the West Capitol Hall of Fame. He has received the Gordon Martin MotorSports Press Association (MSPA) Promoter of the Year award. In 2006, Padjen was voted the National Auto Racing Promoter of the Year. After all the success, Padjen still is humbled. "I never dreamed of being this recognized when I first started promoting race tracks," said Padjen. "However, it does feel rewarding to know that something you have given most of your life to has been appreciated by so many people."

For the past 35 years Padjen has had the same formula for his success. "Put on a good race, let the officials make the calls and make sure your concessions are taken care of," said Padjen. "I have done my job if it's a good night of racing and people don't even realize I am there."



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Bill Sessa, Motorsports Journalist & Contributing Writer
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