



# Dick Jordan

by Jim Morrison

Many great drivers won championships with the United States Auto Club (USAC) during its 52-year history: A.J. Foyt, Mel Kenyon, Rich Vogler. Gary and Tony Bettenhausen. The list goes on.

But, USAC's greatest champion never turned a lap in competition and has as great a passion for the club today as when he was hired on Dec. 8, 1968.

Dick Jordan, USAC's vice-president of communications, is the epitome of the word "champion," as defined "someone who fights for a cause," fits the mild-mannered man responsible for working with hundreds of media representatives. Enthusiastic about racing, Jordan is most passionate when talking about the sanctioning body, which has been his home for more than 39 years.

"I kind of feel like the custodian of USAC," said Jordan. "I am here to hopefully maintain the integrity of this place. I have put a lot of my life, most of my life, into this sport and a lot of it in this company. The success of this company is paramount to me."

Since joining USAC in December of 1968, Jordan has watched USAC make the transition from the top sanctioning body in the United States, with the Indianapolis 500 as its crown jewel, to the grass-roots organization of today, with seventeen different race series under its banner. Some changes, like the 1979 plane crash, have been personally painful as Jordan considered those killed as co-workers and friends. Other transitions were just an organization changing with the pressures of the racing industry.

Racing has always been in Jordan's life. He remembers attending races with his mother and father in the early 1950's. His parents dropped Jordan off at his grandparents en route to the 1955 Indy 500, where his favorite driver, Bill Vukovich, was leading his third consecutive May classic when he crashed to his death. The 11-year-old cried for hours, but the next year, ironically USAC's first, Dick Jordan saw his first Indianapolis 500.

Jordan met his wife at the USAC offices in 1973 and proposed to her at an indoor USAC midget race in Fort Wayne in 1974. He named his son Jimmy Clark Jordan.

"My wife has to be the most patient person that ever lived to put up with the kind of regimen and routine of what I go through on a daily basis," said Jordan. "I don't understand how she can do that. She has basically been the person to whom I owe the most. Without her, I couldn't have done what I have done."

Away from the track, it's a 24-hour, 365-day undertaking. His home phone rings at all hours where he constantly works on results and points standings for the many divisions under the USAC banner. Information requests range from inquiries from media members, promoters and even participants and former participants.

Jordan maintains virtually complete records for drivers and car owners for the entire 52-year history of USAC. Need Mario Andretti's finishes in 1969? Jordan has it. How about Mario's prize money? Jordan has it. How about "Duke" Cook in 1973? Call Dick Jordan at USAC.

"I spend a lot more time here (in the USAC office) than I do at home," said Jordan. "Even when I am home, I have my computer there. I am working on stuff, working on results, working on points on Sunday. If we are not racing on a Sunday, I am here all day long doing press releases, point standings, updating schedules and statistics on events. It never stops. USAC never stops hosting events."

Jordan deals with people from all walks of life, everyone from Indy Car drivers to quarter-midget drivers. And from millionaires to those racing from paycheck-to-paycheck. USAC was even the official sanctioning body for the

Formula One races at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

"Some people you would rather not see their face because they are very difficult to deal with and other people become your best friends," said Jordan.

In nearly 40 years, Jordan has attended one-third of the 7,500 events conducted under the USAC banner. For the last 20 years, he's been to more than 100 races each year and even filed reports on most of those he did not attend.

"When you consider the scope of what we've done and where we've done it, all over the country, that's insane," said Jordan. "We have weekends where we have seventeen or eighteen races on a weekend and they are strung all over the United States. How could I go to one out of every three?"

With between 290 and 300 news releases issued each year, Dick Jordan has probably issued more news releases than anyone else in the history of auto racing. "There is no way people can understand the full scope of what we do here," said Jordan. "Since the '70s, our repertoire of events has been pretty extensive."

So are Jordan's duties. Officially, these include preparing and distributing stories and results to hundreds of media outlets, serving as scoring coordinator, and working with track announcers to ensure they have what's needed to spread the USAC message. If questions arise concerning USAC rules, Jordan issues his interpretation.

He also works in advance of events assisting promoters. Not only is this the distribution of news releases, but working with drivers and promoters to arrange interviews and with owners to have their cars on display to attract fans. He's even phoned participants about plans to race at an event.

In an unofficial role, Jordan works with young drivers to help them understand that their actions outside of a race car and away from the track are often more important than their results in a race car. Learning to work with people is one of the most important life skills a person can possess.

"I have seen a lot of great race car drivers come through USAC who did not go anywhere because they could not deal with people properly," said Jordan. "They did not have the skills to be a PR person for themselves."

Jordan believes a true champion is not someone who wins races and championships, but rather one who understands how to deal with people. "That is a true champion," said Jordan.

All of Jordan's contributions have not come through his official USAC duties. Over the years, he's developed relationships with various drivers and participants. One such relationship has been with Tony Stewart. As the 'Rushville Rocket' moved into the Indy Car and then NASCAR phases of his career, Jordan recognized a need for him to reconnect with friends in and around USAC. Jordan and old friend, Joe DeFabis, put together a card party, normally held between Christmas and New Year's Day. It was during one of those parties that Stewart asked Jordan for Mike Fedorcak's phone number so he could buy the Munchkin to race at Fort Wayne.

"I have seen a little bit of everything in this sport," said Jordan. "I have been very fortunate, obviously, to be involved in a lot of ups and downs. I guess that is how you learn, progress and mature."

Through them all, Dick Jordan has maintained his unfettered belief in the organization.

"I am very proud of the United States Auto Club and what I have been able to accomplish here," said Jordan. "I think USAC's foundation is very secure. The basic principles of USAC are tremendous. There is always opportunity within any association. Right now, I think there is great opportunity with USAC to progress again as we have done for the last 52 years."

Sure there have been mistakes. Any organization makes them. But, Jordan believes the good far exceeds the bad.

"We have been criticized unduly a lot," said Jordan. "I think, for the most part, the United States Auto Club has tried to maintain its integrity though the years."