

# NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

## FRED HOREY

by Don Radbruch

Among the great drivers bred on the rutted and dusty horse tracks of the International Motor Contest Association (IMCA) was Fred Horey. He was the first of a line of champions that, in the pre-World War II years, included Sig Haugdahl, Gus Schrader and Emory Collins. Horey wore the champion's crown in 1925 and 1926. Odds are that if IMCA had named a champion in the years prior to 1925, Horey could have matched Schrader's seven titles.

It would have been easy for most of Horey's exploits to have been lost to history.

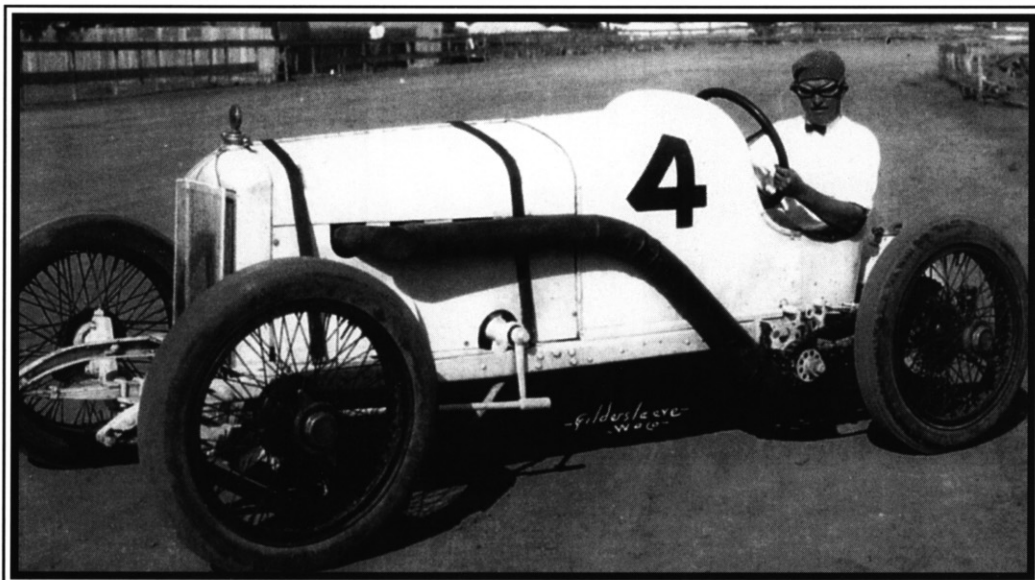
Official IMCA records for that era do not exist. Although there was extensive publicity for the races in the local papers, there was no national media for auto racing. Fortunately, Horey's wife, Hazel, kept a remarkable scrapbook with statistics and photos that remains in the possession of Fred's daughter Christine Horey Logan in Mississippi and serves as a invaluable resource for Horey's career.

A Canadian, Horey was born Frederick Stephen H'Orey in 1884, but the French-Canadian spelling was quickly anglicized to 'Horey' when he began his career. Like many racers of the early 1900s, Horey began his career as a mechanic. He served his apprenticeship with the Case team and, in a few years, worked his way up to a riding mechanic for such fine drivers as Joe Nikrent, 'Wild Bill' Elliott and Eddie Hearne. Horey rode with Nikrent in the 1913 Indianapolis 500 when the pair qualified at 78.89 mph but were credited with an 18th place finish when a bearing went out on the 67th lap.

Horey's early racing career was with the American Automobile Association (AAA) and it is probable that he first drove a beach race at Galveston, Texas, in 1912. His talent as a driver was evident from the beginning and he was soon racing against the likes of Barney Oldfield and Ralph DePalma. During those years, Horey ran in AAA events at state fairs throughout the country and won his share of races.

In 1915, IMCA was formed and it was only natural for Horey to switch from AAA to the new organization as IMCA's founder, J. Alex Sloan, was married to Horey's sister. The decision worked out well for Horey. Fred was one of the early stars of IMCA along with Ben Giroux, Tommy Milton, Texas George Clark, Jules Elingboe, and Louis LeCocq.

Horey drove a variety of cars including "The Bullet", Case, Fiat, Brisco, Frontenac, Nash, Essex, a handful of



Fred Horey

Don Radbruch Collection

Model T conversions and later, a Miller. His ride was usually the best in the field. Horey traveled the country and raced at over one hundred cities in Canada and the United States. Feature wins were posted in at least fifteen states and a couple of provinces.

Since interstate highways did not exist, the wandering IMCA racers traveled by train and were on the road for most of the year. Most of the races were at county fairs and were one- or two-day events. A notable exception were the IMCA sanctioned races at Ascot Speedway in California. Horey spent about six weeks in Los Angeles enjoying a welcome respite from the endless traveling. Horey's main competition at Ascot was another traveler, Ralph DePalma.

There is little doubt that Horey was lucky to survive fifteen years of racing on the primitive horse tracks. He suffered serious injuries in a crash at Jackson, Mississippi, and the responsibilities of fatherhood led him to cut back on his racing in the late 1920's. He finally retired in 1930.

Horey was one of the IMCA greats who, like Gus Schrader, preferred racing on the dirt tracks. He made no real attempt to run the AAA's board tracks or Indy's bricks, but there was little doubt that he would have enjoyed equal success on the larger tracks. Horey stuck to the IMCA and made his fortune there. Shortly before his retirement, the Horey family bought a house in Florida and prepared to enjoy life. However, the stock market crashed in 1929 and the ensuing depression wiped out their life savings. They migrated to the Midwest where, for a time, Horey worked as a bootlegger running booze into Chicago. He later purchased a garage and spent most of his time working on race cars. He stayed close to racing and served as mentor to many up-and-coming drivers before his death at age 62.