

NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

ARMIN KRUEGER

by Bill Baxter & Justin Zoch

There is perhaps no more visually stimulating form of entertainment than sprint car racing. With the speed, the vibrant colors and the close-quartered competition, sprint car racing is hard to resist for those seeking a pounding pulse. However, transferring the thrill to paper is not an easy task. Since the beginning, photographers have hunkered into their trenches to capture the essence of the sport. The ability to catch a sprint car in the lens already establishes one in a small percentage of photographers, but to transfer emotion with a shutter click takes true talent. Armin H. Krueger had that gift.

With a career in photography that spanned nearly 60 years, Krueger compiled a one-man historical record of the sport. Born on August 14, 1922, to Willard and Alice Krueger in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, Armin attended his first 'big car' race in 1933 with his father at the historic Milwaukee Mile. He returned in 1940, at age eighteen, with a camera and permission note from his parents. As he continued lugging his camera bag to the racetrack, Krueger honed the skills that eventually allowed him to capture several award-winning shots, including prestigious honors outside the realm of auto racing, or even sports. His work was featured in many publications over the years and he was a longtime notable contributor to *National Speed Sport News* (since 1941), *Open Wheel* and *Midwest Racing News*, among other media outlets.

Like most photographers, Krueger learned his craft at the speedways around his Wisconsin home but soon started rolling digits on the odometer as he traveled the United States and Canada recording history with every flip of a finger. As he crisscrossed the country snapping photos with his trusty 4x5 Speed Graphic, Krueger gained a vast knowledge of each racetrack and had special spots picked out at each one. To a photographer, finding a spot that will allow for good angles and provide exciting action shots is the key



Armin Krueger

Ralph Hibbard, Jr., Collection

to success and Krueger was inventive, as well as attentive, in his quest for unique and exciting spots. Krueger enjoyed using high angles and gained respect for the clarity of his photos, especially after switching to a motor-driven Canon 35mm camera in the early 1970's.

Throughout his career, Krueger worked diligently as assistant vice president of the West Allis State Bank before retiring in 1987. From that point forward, Krueger, along with his wife Geraldine, enjoyed retirement while spending summers in Woodruff, Wisc., and winters in Davenport, Florida.

Although he captured scenes from many of the most historic racetracks in the sport's history, Krueger was most at home at the most famous, most historic raceway of all... the Brickyard. Krueger first worked his magic in the Indianapolis Motor Speedway's corners in 1948 and worked nearly every one until he suffered a heart attack during time trials of the 1992 event. Although he was slowed following the incident, Krueger continued roaming the speedways until his death on September 11, 2000.

After his death, 'Army' Krueger's massive collection, nearly 50,000 photographs, was gathered and sold to Ralph Hibbard at Greenfield Gallery in Greenfield, Wisconsin.