



**2020 National Sprint Car
Hall of Fame Inductee**

L. SPENCER RIGGS

Media

Spencer Riggs has been a life-long auto racing enthusiast.

He was brought up in an auto racing environment where his father, Ivan, and his grandfather, Joe Riggs, turned wrenches on and sponsored various outlaw Sprint Cars. His mother, Ella, was raised in the shadow of the treacherous Jungle Park Speedway. He was bitten by the racing bug from birth.

Many years after the fact, Riggs told his father about a fantastic race he recalled, held on the old 5/8-mile dirt track at Bloomington, Indiana. In exacting detail, he related the great duel between Jimmie Wilburn and Wayne Padgett. Ivan couldn't believe his son could recall something that had occurred that long ago. "You weren't even two years old when that happened," Ivan blurted. But, when Spencer told him the name of the third place driver was Bud Dombroski taking his first ride in Eddie Gilstrap's Ranger, Ivan had to believe his son. Few would recall Bud's first ride in the yellow deuce.

One year, his wife, Judy, presented him with a pair of auto racing books for Christmas. Riggs enjoyed the books but found several errors in the text of both volumes. When he pointed this out, Judy said: "If you think you know so much, why don't you write a book?"

A few days later, family friend Ted Everroade, a legendary racing personality around Indianapolis who frequented the service station operated by Spencer and his father, gave Riggs something to think about. There were always a group of racers hanging around the station and the stories of bygone racing exploits were constant and varied. One evening as Riggs was closing up shop, Everroade said: "You know, it's a shame that all these great old tales will be lost when we're all gone. Someone should be writing this stuff down for future generations."

Between the two comments, Spencer found the impetus to propel him into the world of writing. Ninety percent of which has centered on his



beloved Sprint Cars and the personalities who race them.

A freelance writer with 50 years experience, his work has appeared in *National Speed Sport News*, *Automobile Quarterly*, *Vintage Motorsport*, *Open Wheel*, *Circle Track*, *Auto Racing Digest*, *Indy Car*, *Classic Racer*, *Collectable Car*, *Car and Driver*, *Coast Car Collector*, *Ohio Magazine*, *The Indianapolis Star*, *The Anderson (Indiana) Herald*, *The Lebanon (Pennsylvania) Daily News* and the British publication *MotorSports*.

"No freelance writer stays with any one publication longer than a few years," Riggs says. "I've seen them move on to—greener pastures—in six months or less. But I stayed with *Automobile Quarterly* for 19 years and another 12 years with *Vintage Motorsport*. That was due to the staff, and two very fine editors, in particular. Jonathan A. Stein was at AQ, and D. Randy Riggs (no relation) is still at VM.

One of Riggs' earliest writing assignments was research writer for Mr. Paul Harvey's radio show "The Rest of the Story."

A versatile history writer, Mr. Riggs' haunting portrait of Indiana bank robber John Dillinger, entitled—"John Dillinger: The Legends Linger"—moved one reader of *The Indianapolis Star* to submit the story for the 1984 Pulitzer Prize.

Riggs has authored two books on the Indy 500 Pace Cars and co-authored the well-received "Indy 500 Chronicles," with fellow writer Rick Popely. In 2008, his astonishing 560-page tome "Langhorne! No Man's Land," won the American Auto Racing Writers and Broadcasters Association Book of the Year award.

A long-time member of the above organization, his efforts have won 16 first place magazine writing awards from AARWBA. Most of them very top-heavy on the Sprinters. In 2011, he won the Bloys Britt Memorial Writing Award for the most unusual story of the year. This pertained to the little known effort of Ray Harroun's relief driver, Cyrus Patschke during the inaugural Indy 500 in 1911.

In 1995 and '96, he won the coveted Carl Benz Award, given annually by The Society of Automotive Historians.

In 2008, he won the Golden Medallion given by the International Motor Media for excellence in writing. In recent years, he has won the Gold and Silver Stars given by the same organization.

He has in excess of 2,000 magazine articles to his credit.

Riggs gives a good deal of honor and gratitude to long-time friend, mentor and publisher Joe Freeman at Racemaker Press for his support and assistance throughout all these years.

A salute goes out to Rick Whitt at Pitstop Books for his untiring work on the Langhorne Book, and other projects.

Also, a mention of Frank Pieler at Publications International is warranted. Riggs could always rely on Frank to come up with a unique idea for a book or magazine article.

With all this going on, Riggs still finds time to put out a calendar named for famous "Official AAA Photographer" Bud Williams. This publication has been an annual racing staple since 2000. And, of course, the central theme is Sprint Car racing.

In addition to his writing, Riggs is a member of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Hall of Fame Selection Committee and the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame Board.

With pen and paper, Spencer has remained a keeper of the past. The present is not complete without knowledge of what has occurred before our time. Thanks to Riggs, those wonderful bygone days are still only a turn of the page away. 🏆

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