

MARK "BONES" BOURCIER - WRITER

By Doug Kennedy



Photo: Ayers Racing Images

BORN MARK BOURCIER, the 63-year-old from Southington, Connecticut, has been writing racing articles and books since he was 15 years old. His first job in 1976 was as a writer for *Gater Racing News* out of New York. Three years later, Bourcier moved to Massachusetts at the age of 19 to become the managing editor for *Speedway Scene*. Beginning in 1988, he wrote for *Open Wheel* and *Stock Car Racing* magazines and *Speedway Illustrated* for Dick Berggren. From 1999 and on, he has been a freelance writer.

Because of his love for the Indianapolis 500, he moved to Indianapolis to become a major part of open wheel racing. He is the author of many racing books including *Racing Safely*, *Living Dangerously: The Hard Life and Fast Times of a Motorsports Mogul* (Bill Simpson), *Through the Fire* (Bill Simpson), *True Speed: My Racing Life* (Tony Stewart), *As a Matter of Fact I am Parnelli Jones*, *The People's Champ: A Racing Life* (Dave Darland), *Wicked Fast: Racing Through Life* with Bentley Warren, Foyt, *Andretti*, *Petty: America's Racing Trinity*, *Ed Pink: The Old Master* and *Sammy!- 50 + Years of Winning* (Sammy Swindell)

Other works that he has done are *Hot*

Shoe (Gary Balough), *Sea to Shining Sea*, *Racing from the Wild West to Daytona* (Ken Clapp's autobiography), Mark Martin's upcoming autobiography, *Bugsy* (Bugs Stevens), *Richie* (Richie Evans), *Steady Eddie* (Ed Flemke), *The Kid from Fitchburg* (Ron Bouchard), and *Utica-Rome: The Home of Heroes*. Overall, he has written 20 books since 1999. "Almost too busy," laughed Bourcier.

He is a two-time winner of the prestigious Miller Racing Award of Excellence. It is one of motorsports journalism's most coveted annual prize. He also was the recipient of the Eastern Motorsports Press Association's "Frank Blunk Memorial Award" for outstanding contribution to the racing field.

So where did Mark Bourcier get the nickname of "Bones"? "I had asthma, not hospital bad, but bad enough, and I was skinny as a rail," said Bourcier. "My fifth grade teacher started calling me "Bones" and the nickname stuck. As far as the writing goes, everyone began to know me by that name. A photographer, Mike Adaskaveg, lined me up with *Gater*. They wanted him to do a New England column, but he was too busy at the time and recommended me. I typed up a sample column for them, Mike scrawled the name of "Bones" on it, and *Gater* ended up printing that simple nickname and all. The nickname was a better idea than using my real name because everyone remembers a nickname."

"I love writing about people. I hope readers learn something new about the person before they put down the book or the publication. I've occasionally had people get mad at me for things I've written, but that's part of the deal. If you take a shot at someone because that serves the story, rather than doing it gratuitously and the facts are right, then it's fine."

"If someone isn't an interesting character then I don't want to do the story in the first place," said Bourcier regarding the type of stories he writes. "They (the drivers) need to be fascinating to me and interesting to the reader. A.J. (Foyt), Parnelli (Jones), and Mario (Andretti) were all good interviews. Sammy Swindell is another. He was known as a not too talkative guy, but after spending hour after hour with him, things changed. It's nice to have a guy who normally doesn't

talk much open up—that's what makes a great interview. You can't put words in their mouths, so you have to listen to what they say. Those types of guys who don't tell the story the same way each time and are not just robots, they're the ones I enjoy talking with. When you interview guys that are business types like A.J. and Sammy, as you go through the transcripts later you realize they're giving you something more than a standard answer. You never know what you're going to get. It's like finding nuggets of gold."

As far as ever having a tough or even a bad interview, he said, "There are really no bad interviews. If a guy is short-tempered and doesn't want to deal with me at the end of a bad night but does the interview anyway, you're going to get his true feelings."

He remembers his interview sessions with Bentley Warren as "true fun," and another different type of interview was one he did for a magazine feature on Bill Vukovich, Jr. who lost both his dad and his son both in racing accidents. That was a hard interview. There were a lot of tears. But people talk about that story even today." The same can be said for an interview he did with Bobby Allison, who lost his two sons Clifford and Davey. "That was a very emotional series of interviews over a few days."

Bourcier said other tough interviews are with the guys who are big winners and are so intense. The guys he put in this category are A.J. Foyt, Dale Earnhardt, Steve Kinser and Sammy Swindell. "Most people are afraid of those types, but if you manage to get in and get that good interview, you've probably done something that the readers don't see very often."

Currently, he does a monthly column for *Speed Sport*. "I like all types of racing. I like everything from pavement or dirt Modifieds to F1. I can't imagine how many Sprint, Silver Crown and Midget stories I've done."

Getting into the Sprint Car Hall of Fame is very special. "It was unexpected, but a wonderful surprise. I'm honored to get in because not too many of our types, media people, get in there and those that do are my heroes. All I can say is it's damn nice to be there." ■