

BILL HOLDER - WRITER

By Doug Kennedy

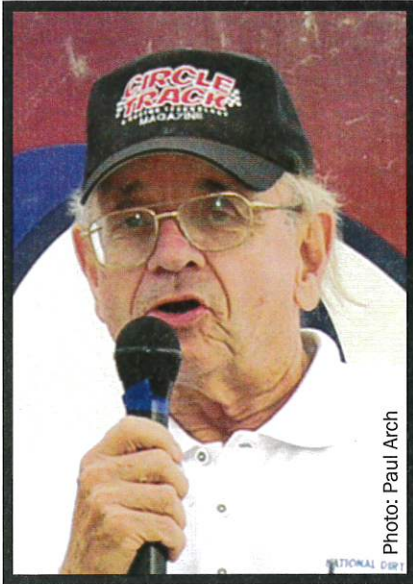


Photo: Paul Arch

BILL HOLDER grew up in the heart of Sprint Car racing being born and raised in Richmond, Indiana and now living in Dayton, Ohio. He is the author of better than 400 racing articles and 50 plus books. His articles/stories have been published in *Open Wheel*, *Sprint Car & Midget*, *Vintage Oval Racing*, *Victory Lane*, *Autoweek*, *Vintage Motorsports*, *Sprint Car*, and *Circle Track*. Drivers who he has written about include Jeff Gordon, Ryan Newman, Gary Bettenhausen, Larry Dickson, Troy Ruttman, Rollie Beale, Tony Stewart, Roger McCluskey, Jeff Bloom, Tom Bigelow, and many more.

He also authored books on Eldora Speedway, Winchester Speedway, Dayton High Banks, Richmond, Indiana racing, the All-Stars and on sprint car racing itself. He's a retired Aerospace Engineer who has written a variety of other articles besides those surrounding just racing. Last summer, he was part of a one-hour documentary on Winchester Speedway and its' 100 years of existence and was joined by Tony Stewart and Jeff Gordon.

Holder was also a founder of the National Dirt Late Model Hall of Fame located at Florence Speedway in Walton, Kentucky. He also has a vested interest with the Dayton Auto Racing Fan Club, the Fremont Speedway Hall of Fame, and in the University of Northwest Ohio.

But it's not just the writing but the interesting array of celebrities outside the racing box, who are certainly very intriguing. He has done everything from

briefing the CIA and the Secretary of Defense to consulting with space program guru Wernher Von Braun. As mentioned, Bill was a graduate of Purdue University with a degree in Engineering. And that's where the similarities between he and Jeff Gordon begin. The book on Gordon is perhaps Holder's fondest book. "I asked him what he would have done if he never went racing. His dad said that he would have closed his business if his son, Jeff, wanted to go racing. Jeff actually said that he would go to Purdue and get an engineering degree like I did, if he didn't go racing."

His favorite interview came from a veteran race driver by the name of Tom Bigelow. He remembers a time when Tom and he were walking around the old New Bremen Speedway in Ohio and reminiscing about the racing success that Tom had at that track. "It was very emotional because we were walking around the track while it was being torn down," Holder said. The track closed for good in 1981.

Tony Stewart was also somewhat of a challenge for Bill. He remembers a time when he was speaking with Tony and told him that he wrote for a magazine that covered a number of tracks. "Tony said that if he was doing one on Eldora then he would do an interview with me after his plane had landed," remembers Holder. "And he did the interview."

And speaking of Eldora Speedway and Tony Stewart, the current owner of the track, Holder remembers when Earl Baltes saw a race and said that he could do that too with the right track. "He was a

farmer up in northern Ohio and decided to build the track that became Eldora. You could see him at times at 2AM out on the track with a spotlight and a tractor.

He also remembers when he could have been killed at an indoor show in Fort Wayne. "They were running Midgets and I was sitting in the stands not paying attention when a Midget running full bore coming out of turn one broke and the whole front end of the car was flying right at me. I remembered someone saying that where it would land was usually three rows or so behind where I was actually sitting. Sure enough, it missed me."

"As a kid, I remember asking my dad what that noise was from and told me it was from Richmond Speedway. I became a racing fan from that time on," said Holder. "They raced every night and I used to sneak through the back-gate. I love every aspect of racing. It's the reception you get. In the beginning, you have to walk up to the gate and tell them you are a writer for whatever magazine and then when you get a credential, they ask when are you going to write about us."

He also donates race cars that he has to places like the performance school in Lima Ohio. His grandson is a student at the school, the University of Northwestern Ohio, an automotive school. The school also has an active track in Limaland.

At 87 years of age, Holder has a plethora of racing stories which helped Bill Holder to land a spot in the Sprint Car Hall of Fame, class of 2024. "A great surprise," he said. "It's one of the greatest things that has ever happened to me in my crazy career." ■



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