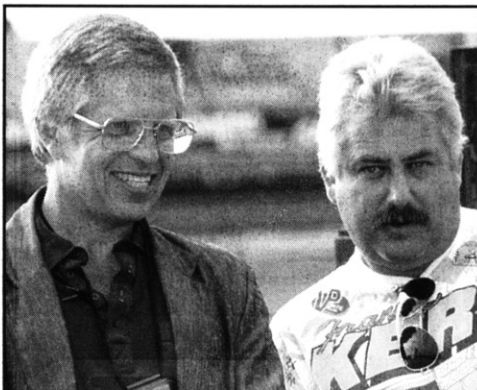


NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

JOE SCALZO

by Justin Zoch



Joe Scalzo (left)

Paul Arch Photo

It is the emotion and the passion of sprint car racing that most often captivates our minds and ensures our devotion and enjoyment. However, it takes a certain soulfulness to artfully capture these emotions and transmit them to the casual fan via the printed word. It is difficult to make history important in the present and give it a sense of relevance and urgency, but Los Angeles area native Joe Scalzo has done this for the better portion of his life and the sport owes him a debt of gratitude for making us recognize and remember.

Scalzo has authored an ever-expanding series of books on the subject of open-wheel racing that have included "The Unbelievable Uners" in 1971, "The Bobby Unser Story", "Indy 500 Mechanic" with Clint Brawner in 1975, "Speedway" in 1981, "Indianapolis Roadsters 1952-1964" in 1999, and "The American Dirt Track Racer" in 2001.

These books are important and relevant because they do more than list statistics and dates; they provide a concise portrait of the colorful history of our sport through its stars and cars. Listing A.J. Foyt's victories would never convey the

grandness and glory of the Texan without knowing the nuances and nature of the man behind those numbers. That is what Joe Scalzo does best.

Scalzo, being a former motorcycle racer himself, first started writing about the accomplishments of motorsport's two-wheeled stars. He penned "Racer: The Story of Gary Nixon", "The Bart Markel Story" in 1972, "Motorcycle Ace: The Dick Mann Story", "Evel Knievel and Other Daredevils" (about Evel Knievel, 'Speedy' Babbs, Lee 'Iron Man' Irons and Bobby Gill), and "Evel Knievel" in 1974.

Scalzo's choice of subjects, whether in the thousands of magazine and newspaper features that he has written or in his books, seem to have a common thread. This respect and awe for 'the superstars of dirt track racing, the most violent and dangerous sport on wheels,' is possibly best exemplified in his 1975 book "Dirt Track Daredevils". In it, he explores the exciting personalities and accomplishments of such two- and four-wheel champions as A.J. Foyt, Mario Andretti, Ernie Triplett and Al Gordon, Don Hawley, Parnelli Jones, Carroll Resweber, Mike Patrick, Johnny Thomson, Pierre Karsmakers, and Mel Kenyon.

Scalzo has an uncanny penchant for writing about innovation, motivation and risk. He examines the ingenuity and the beauty of the legendary roadsters while carefully examining the men who cheated death for fame and fortune. It isn't just about the machines or just about the personalities for Scalzo; it is about how the two intertwine to create beauty, majesty and excitement.

"Stand On The Gas!: Sprint Car Racing in America" has generally been regarded as the defining work in Scalzo's catalog and has been the standard in

hardbound sprint car literature since its release in 1974. The book was compiled during the 1972-73 seasons and features profiles of some of the most recognizable, legendary names in the history of the sport. At the time, the book provided a fascinating look at such future Hall of Famers as Jan Opperman, Kenny Weld, Gary Bettenhausen, Larry Dickson, Eddie Sachs, Greg Weld, Wally Meskowski, Gordon Woolley, Roger McCluskey, Don Branson and Tommy Hinnershitz.

In the book, Joe documented the evolution from Offenhausers to Chevrolets through the eyes of pioneering pilots like Parnelli Jones, Jim Hurtubise and A.J. Foyt. He showed the reader a glimpse of life on the International Motor Contest Association fair circuit with Bobby Grim, and in the chrome world of the California Racing Association. And he captured the intense rivalries within the United States Auto Club with Sammy Sessions, Rollie Beale and Lee Kunzman.

More than just man and machine, he explored the 'Hills of Death', the high-banked macadam tracks of Salem, Winchester, and Dayton, through the exploits of such heroes as Duane Carter, Troy Ruttman, Bob Sweikert and Ed Eliasian. And the 'abnormal' bravery of larger-than-life drivers like Mike Nazaruk and Johnny White.

Joe Scalzo, author of the well-read series of "Open Wheel" columns called 'Yesterday' and "Circle Track" columns entitled 'Yesterday & Today', is currently working on producing his fourteenth written motorsports masterpiece from his home in Sierre Madre, California.

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