

NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

DICK SUTCLIFFE

Dick Sutcliffe was born on March 5, 1938, in Kansas City, Missouri. His parents were Edith Porter and Dewey Cass. Dick has four sisters, Shirley Schumacher, Judy Randal, Sara Trojan and Elizabeth Barnes.

After high school, Dick drove a truck for a transportation company which also employed Cecil Davis, Chet Hamby and Jud Larson. Needless to say, Dick was introduced to dirt track racing at an early age. And it didn't take long for him to realize that he wanted to drive the racing cars, too.

Dick began racing modifieds in 1956 at the local Kansas City tracks, Lakeside Speedway, and the Olympic and Riverside Stadiums.

By the early Sixties, the young A-class super-modified driver was starting to earn a reputation as a real racer and a potential winner. At this time he started traveling to more places, like Topeka, Ks., and Knoxville, Iowa. It was a path that had been taken by Taylor "Pappy" Weld and his "racin' boys" just a year or two before. "Tiger Bob" Williams, who was moving up the ranks at the same time as Dick, rounded out the "Kansas City Mafia" as they were known at Knoxville.

By 1966, Dick had already started accumulating wins and points championships at Riverside, Olympic, and Topeka. He had also raced occasionally with the International Motor Contest Association (IMCA), and made the Knoxville Nationals A-main.

In the mid-Sixties, Dick was driving primarily for Gary Hanna. He won at Knoxville and tried some United States Auto Club (USAC) racing with Hanna in 1967. He won five times at Knoxville in '68, claiming the prestigious point title ahead of Joe Saldana, Jerry Blundy, and Lloyd Beckman. He finished sixth in that year's Knoxville Nationals, won at Belleville, Ks., and earned eighth place in the final IMCA point standings. He even ran for Wally Meskowski at Granite City, IL., following Johnny Rutherford's injury (only to be fired the next day by Wally in favor of A.J. Foyt).

In the inaugural Western States Sprint Car Championships at Manzanita Speedway in Phoenix, Ariz., Dick was running second when he overshot the first turn, causing the car to break away and bound for the low outside concrete wall. His right rear wheel clobbered the wall, sending Sutcliffe into a series of tumbling flips. His sprinter barreled through Manzy's thin sheet metal advertising signage, clearing the wall and landing out on

35th Avenue by the 24-hour cut-rate market.

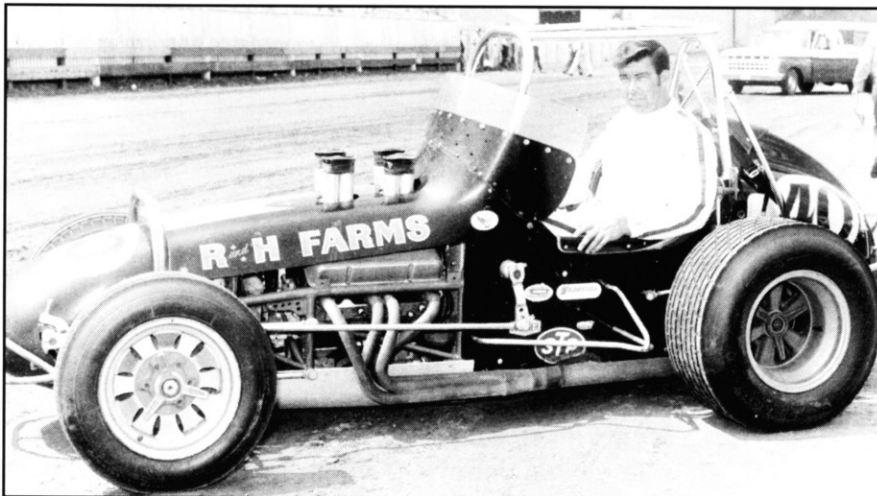
In 1969, Dick finished fifth in the IMCA points behind Darl Harrison, Don Mack, Jay Woodside, and Russ Laursen, on the strength of two wins at Lincoln, Nebr., and one at Oklahoma City, Okla. Dick also finished fourth at the Knoxville Nationals behind Kenny Gritz, Jan Opperman and Bob Williams. He also claimed victories that year with Hanna at Eagle (3), Olympic and Topeka, and made the Western World A-main.

The next season, 1970, Dick climbed to fourth in the IMCA standings, driving for John Ricke and brothers Tom & Stan Hill. The R&H Farms black number 40 machine won one IMCA show, and two others on the pavement at I-70 in Odessa, Mo. He also scored wins at Olympic, Eagle(3), Knoxville, Granite City, Belleville, and Sedalia. At the '70

and won 18 times including at Belleville, Topeka (2), Knoxville, Grand Island, and Eagle. At Keith Hall's Western States Show, Dick finished sixth. According to Billy Wilkerson, "I'd drive all the way down here just to watch Sutcliffe race. Brother, he does stand on the gas!"

Sutcliffe once sized up his legendary driving style in the early to mid-Seventies by saying "I used to win races by bravery alone. Now I'm older. I guess I try to win them with bravery and brains both. That's how Jud Larson won."

In 1973, Dick Sutcliffe prevailed for a second time as Knoxville track champion with eight wins. It was a split season as the first half was "fun without wings" and the latter half was "fun with 'em". Also that year he won twice at Topeka and captured that track's title again.



Dick Sutcliffe

Armin Krueger Photo

"Mr. Excitement" re-united with Van Patten in '74 to win at Midwest (3), North Starr (2), Knoxville (2), and Stuart, Iowa. The Greenwood, Mo., resident also raced with the Midwest Sprint Association (MSA).

In 1975 and '76, Dick continued racing and winning at Eagle (2) and Knoxville, but he knew the end of his career was near. He finished seventh in his final Knoxville Nationals in '76 while driving for Dick Morris. At the famed track's season championships, Dick knew it was "a good time and a good place" to end his driving

career.

In 1979, Dick was inducted into the Knoxville Raceway Hall of Fame on the merits of his 17 feature wins at the Marion County Fairgrounds and his incredible record of ten Nationals A-main starts in 12 attempts, including six top ten finishes.

Sutcliffe has been an entrepreneur most of his working life, and he continues to successfully own and operate commercial trucking/warehousing/distribution and carpet installation businesses.

Dick lives today with his third wife Vicki, of 21 years in Lake Waukomis. He has six children, Rick Sutcliffe, Terry Sutcliffe, Sherri Rupard, Robert Sutcliffe, Dana Smith, and Sarah Sutton, and twelve grandchildren. Because of Dick's career, the entire family which includes American Speed Association (ASA) racer Rick Beebe, are big auto racing enthusiasts. Because of Rick's accomplishments with the Los Angeles Dodgers (National League Rookie, 1979) and the Chicago Cubs (Cy Young Award winner, 1984), the Sutcliffe family members are also major-league baseball fans. In addition, the Sutcliffe's are avid golfers.

Knoxville Nationals, Sutcliffe was closing in on eventual race winner Saldana, when on the 23rd lap, according to Dick, "A spark plug wire became detached. I guess a clod of dirt or something hit it." He finished second.

In 1971, Sutcliffe partnered with Bob Trostle and Dave Van Patten to finish second in the IMCA points, behind Jerry Blundy, at the wheel of the Van's Mobile Homes Corn Belt Special Trostle/Chevy sprinter. They garnered one IMCA win at Knoxville, Ill., but their consistency allowed them to beat Eddie Leavitt, Ron Larson and Chuck Amati in the points. They also won at Eagle (4), Knoxville, and a 'biggie' at Kokomo, Ind., over Norman "Bubby" Jones and Bob Kinser. The 6'6" Sutcliffe earned a fourth in the '71 Knoxville Nationals behind Jan Opperman, Earl Wagner, and Eddie Leavitt. According to car builder/owner/mechanic Bob Trostle, "You know, I had to build a cage that was 5" taller for Dick."

1972 brought a third place finish in IMCA points for Sutcliffe and Corn Belt Racing following sanctioned wins at Knoxville, Il., Springfield, Mo., Eldon, Iowa, and Topeka Ks. They raced 78 events