

NATIONAL SPRINT CAR HALL of FAME & MUSEUM

LARRY SULLIVAN



Larry Sullivan

Jeff Adams Collection

Larry Sullivan is being inducted into the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame in 1999 in honor of his outstanding achievements as a media member, including his voluminous work as a photographer in the glory days of 'big car' racing.

Lawrence Sullivan was born in Albany (Ill.) on February 6, 1906, to parents John & Mary Sullivan. He had two sisters, Catherine and Nora, and three brothers, John, George and Maurice. Larry attended the Slocum Street rural school in Albany. Upon graduation, Larry went to work in Clinton (Iowa). Throughout his adult life he labored hard as a factory worker.

On July 4, 1927, Larry attended his first 'big car' race in Davenport (Iowa).

He was hooked. The first photo he ever took was of Gus Schrader, and one of the last was of Steve Kinser. Larry literally captured the evolution of sprint car racing on film.

Larry began photographing the cars and drivers on the 'big car' racing scene, and it is estimated that his career collection included over 5,000 photos. It is said that Larry never took a picture without per-

mission from the car owner or driver. It is also said that he never sold his photos at the tracks, although he always made sure that the teams received any photos that they wanted.

In 1934, he married Beulah Orchid, who just recently passed away. They had no children. Sullivan took his Kodak camera, paper and pen to tracks throughout the Midwest. He viewed, photographed and officiated 'big car' and midget racing, and the material that he gathered at those races went into publications such as the Coast Auto Racing News, the Bergen (N.J.) Herald/ National Speed Sport News (NSSN) and the Illustrated Speedway

News. His "Midwest Whispers" column in Chris Economaki's NSSN paper was a must read for sprint car fans.

Larry once said that Ralph DePalma was the greatest driver he ever saw compete, and that Ira Hall always had a great smile for the camera. He also said that he took more photos of Jerry Blundy than of any other open wheel driver, although Schrader, Bryan Saulpaugh and John Gerber would have to rank right up at the top, too.

Sullivan also tried to keep a record of every race car driver that ever lost his/her life in racing. It was Larry's way to make sure that their memories would never be forgotten. He was a walking encyclopedia of open wheel racing history, and his photo and program collection captured and preserved history that might have otherwise been lost or forgotten. In 1996, he was honored by the Midwest Old Timers organization as he was the first person inducted into their Wall of Fame.

Today, Larry lives at the Harbor Crest Nursing Home in Fulton (Ill.), although his health, especially his memory, is not what it used to be. Larry Sullivan's impressive photo collection currently resides with historian Jeff Adams of Coal Valley (Ill.).