



MISSION STATEMENT

A) To discover, identify, gather, preserve, and display documents, records, items, etc. pertaining to eastern auto racing facilities, competitors, personalities or events.

B) To assist writers to publish and/or research articles regarding historical eastern auto racing topics.

Our organization collects & displays articles dealing with any eastern auto racing facilities for any racing enthusiast to enjoy. Please consider either joining our organization or contributing to our projects.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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_____ \$25 SUPPORTER
Non-voting supporter of the mission statement of the EARHS. Admission to showroom by appointment.

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PLEASE MAIL TO:

EARHS, P.O. BOX 333, OREFIELD, PA 18069
Make checks payable to EARHS.

For additional information
call 610 395-5303 or 484 239-4145

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www.earhs.org



Eastern Auto Racing
Historical Society

Newsletter 2022 Vol. XIX Ed. #4

Pete Trumbauer and I were battling the breeze the other night when it dawned on us it's been twenty-five years since we designed, built, and promoted the dirt track at 'The Fairgrounds at Kutztown'.

I became the first out-of-state dealer for Legends cars in 1993 and grew the series from eight cars at our first event at Evergreen Raceway in 1993 to a traveling series running at eight speedways, both asphalt and dirt, with thirty-two dates and more than 100 competitors in 1996. In 1994 I left the Evergreen promotion, which had brought the St. Johns, PA asphalt track back to life in 1988, and run the facility successfully for six years. My wife, Vicki, was dealing with her third go-round with breast cancer early in '94 and there were a lot of things going on with my responsibilities heading Firestone's northeast race tire warehouse and the newly formed Keystone Legends Tour. Fortunately, most of the administrative work could be handled from my Orefield, PA offices and I had strong family support on those days/nights I had to be out of town. Originally, Vicki and I traveled together to Evergreen, but with her now unable to make the trip, two nights per week in St. Johns became problematic for me. Unfortunately, Vicki passed away on June 21, 1996.

Despite a hectic 1996, the Keystone Legends Tour ran a full schedule, with a few weekends off when I was tied up with providing Firestone tire service for NHRA Division I points races and NHRA national events. I was always looking for another venue to host Legends car events and decided to take a booth at the PA Showman's Association meeting at Hershey, PA in January of 1997. I had a few nibbles from representatives from regional PA fairs about presenting a racing program as part of their annual fair. Most were from the western part of the state where travel was a problem for competitors for mid-week shows. The Keystone Legends Tour had successfully run several Wednesday night programs at the then quarter-mile asphalt track at New Egypt, NJ, but these proposed fair dates were not anywhere close to the geographical center for our group.

EARHS
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Orefield, PA 18069

One of the last inquiries I had was from Marcus Held, president of the Kutztown, PA Fair Assn. He was interested in someone to lease the fairgrounds, build a track in front of their already existing aluminum grandstands, and promote racing events during the summer months. We spoke about a rental fee per night, confirmed the facility would only be available from June through mid-August with a week off for the Fair's 'PA Dutch Folk Festival' celebration, and agreed I'd stop by to look at the physical layout, while Marcus would contact his board members about a February meeting.

Immediately upon arriving home, I called Pete to run past him about what had transpired to date. Pete was my unofficial assistant with the Keystone Tour for a few years, but more importantly, had spent many years in the Kutztown area, knew lots of people in town, and who to call to get things done. He was a guy I could work with, who had the people skills I sometimes lack, and had the ambition to get things done in a pretty short time span. At the end of our conversation, I had a partner and we made plans for our meeting with the Kutztown Fair board.

The February meeting with the board found everyone on the same page and I drew up a contract specifying the responsibilities of both parties for a three-year term, which the fair board and their attorney accepted. Among other points, Pete and I would incur the costs of transforming the grassy area in front of the grandstand into a working racetrack, including lighting, fences, a starter's stand, and safety lights as required. People have asked how we determined the final size of the track – not everyone's first thought is to build a sixth of a mile. Truth be known, we measured the distance from the grandstand to the western boundary at the fairgrounds, subtracted the amount of distance needed to park tow rigs for approximately one hundred competitors and this measurement gave us the overall width of the track. We also noted at these dimensions approximately seven feet of fill would be required to install the backstretch as planned. Prior to the beginning of construction, Pete and I formed Berks County Racing Association, Inc. to keep the finances and liability of our undertaking confined. Pete made the formal announcement of our plans and opening date at the Reading Fairgrounds Reunion and at the beginning of March, dump trucks began arriving, and the area hosting the new track began to take shape.

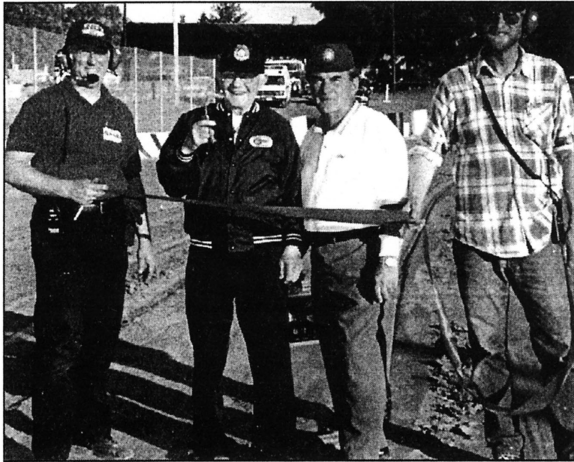
Our immediate task was to install concrete highway barriers to mark the projected location of the front and back straights, each 35' in width. Once the walls were in place, a center line between front and back walls could be determined and we employed our trusty rope to lay out the turns. We anchored our rope on the center line at the end of the straight and extended it to the inside of the front stretch wall. We then swung an arc, marking the path as we went, which ended at the inside of the backstretch concrete. Concrete barriers were then added approximately six feet back from the radius as marked and the process was repeated at the other end. After the outside barriers were installed, we measured 50' toward the infield from the center of the turns and simply laid out the inside of the track. Competitors using the radius at the top would surely have the faster groove, but those working the bottom would have a shorter path – worked beautifully and provided two groove racing from day one. Of course, the final length of the track is also a function of the width of the track. Many people have asked why we did not extend the straights to make a longer track, but it was my view longer straights simply make for bigger crashes in turns one and three! Kutztown was always a racy little place, the competition was intense and the fans were on the edge of their seats.

As the construction proceeded, we bought a significant amount of 'experienced' iron pipe from a scrap yard in Oley, PA to support the catch fence on the straights, made a trip to Long Island to acquire a large number of rolls of tow cable taken out of service by a buddy of Legend car competitor, Ray Scigowski to strengthen our cyclone fence in people populated areas, and our contractor began sinking the three infield light poles. He had to use dynamite when a large formation of rock was encountered! So many people just showed up to help, however, they could. Every night was a work party! Ronnie Dunstan handled the electric service for the lighting and I'll never forget little Ray Huber standing ON TOP of the middle light pole, guiding the lights into place. Kutztown tree specialist, Bob Roth, brought his bucket truck to help with the lights and good pal, Jimmy Rothenberger, arrived with his portable welder and was seen laying in the dirt welding the backstretch billboard section – this image is so wrong I can't believe it happened!



Although our opener on the first Wednesday in June was rapidly approaching, things began to come together. The outer walls were in place, the track surface had been trucked in and was spread and worked into shape, the catch fences were up and the Long Island cable had been installed for spectator safety, a portable building for use as a pit sign-in was on skids and towed into position at the pit entrance, the lights and the sound system were both connected and functional, and the starter's stand I built off-site in Orefield was erected and it fits in the place allotted. I had lined up Tommy Hiinnershitz, who raced AAA sprint cars on the Kutztown half-mile after WWII, to cut the ribbon on opening night, ordered an entire season's worth of adult and kid's tickets from Globe Ticket, Inc., and had Eric and Henry Haas at Parkland Bindery in Allentown print the entire season's worth of numbered pit passes. I also visited many area micro-sprint tracks to talk to competitors about supporting Kutztown. Fortunately, I knew most of the operators and had worked with many of them with events for the Keystone Legends Tour. When I explained we were running on Wednesday nights and I simply wanted to 'borrow' their regular competitors, not steal them, there were no objections. The Legends drivers were all in for a Wednesday show at Kutztown since we had excellent support for mid-week shows on the pavement at New Egypt the previous season. Kutztown shows on Wednesdays were no problem for New Egypt either, since they were eyeing a dirt track to replace the original paved oval. For the finishing touch, Pete made arrangements with a food truck to be on hand, since we weren't sure any of the

permanent stands on the grounds were planning to operate. Of course, in our spare time, we were both contacting prospective program book and backstretch billboard advertisers. And then it rained.



SNIP IT - Former racing great Tommy Hinnershitz (holding scissors) gets ready to cut the ribbon to open the new Kutztown Fairgrounds racetrack last Wednesday night. (Don Marks photo)

Opening night, Wednesday, June 4, 1997, Paul Weisel, Tommy Hinnershitz, Kutztown Fair president, Marcus Held, Pete Trumbauer.

With the help of Brian Levan of Levan's Machine in Oley, PA, we had a pretty nice little water truck on hand with arrangements made to secure water locally for our events. We really didn't need the water truck on opening

night – we received two days of hard rain on Monday and Tuesday and our new racetrack was a sea of goo. We knew enough not to immediately get out there with our two packer cars, even with their wide Firestones on the back, but by early afternoon something had to be done. Our two cars were no match for the conditions and were

probably doing more harm than good, when Richard Witwer, an excavator from Fleetwood stopped by. He had just what was needed, went home and brought his grader to the fairgrounds, and adeptly removed several inches of goo off the top of our track. Once the slop was piled at a spot where we could easily re-spread it later, we were able to run in the track with all hands and equipment on deck. The fans and competitors arrived in droves, Tommy cut the ribbon,

the lights came on at dusk as promised, and our first night of competition was in the books. At the end of the night, Rich Witwer was on his grader spreading the material he removed earlier and sending the dirt from the cushion back down the speedway. After the feature finishers were paid and the racers were heading home, Pete and I met at the KLASCAR trailer in the pits and just enjoyed a soft drink. We looked like two guys who had just gone fifteen rounds, but there was still work to be done. Pete had things to put away, shut off the PA system and lights, and lock everything up for the night. I was on my way home to write the story of the evening's races, send the press releases, and get the points and articles ready for the program book. All the program book information had to be at the printer early Thursday morning and track photographers Ken Frantz and Dave Gehman arrived Thursday night with their prints from the previous night, which I reviewed and brought the chosen ones to Parkland Bindery early Friday morning. At that time I proofread all the previously submitted info and Eric Haas and I made corrections as required. On Monday morning, I proofread all the photo captions and the new program book was printed on Monday afternoon, folded and stapled on Tuesday morning, and ready for pickup on Wednesday morning. On the weekends there were still Keystone Legends Tour races to be run, NHRA drag races to be serviced for Firestone, and Pete liked to spend his free time at hot rod shows and flea markets. Between the two of us, I'm not sure how many 'balls were in the air' at any one time, but there were a lot of them!

Prior to our opening event, BCRA and the fair board directors were required to appear before the Kutztown zoning board. Apparently, the zoning board was going to decide if the Kutztown Fairgrounds could present auto racing on its grounds. From the information we received from a friendly source inside their earlier meetings, the town solicitor advised they had no legal right to tell the fair board what they could or could not present. The Kutztown Fair is one of many fairs throughout the state operating as part of the state fair system which is granted funds to present their fair and, specifically, to present 'sporting events', at their facility during the year.

The event drew quite a crowd of supporters and opponents of racing at the fairgrounds. After public questioning and discussion, the zoning board huddled and then announced they would grant us a permit to conduct races at the fairgrounds. Supporters cheered

and opponents were indignant, but everyone became quiet when Marcus Held and I rose to thank them for their willingness to provide a permit to race at the fairgrounds, however, we respectfully declined their offer because legally we didn't need their permission – and we certainly did not want to appeal to the zoning board each year to renew their support. Meeting over. Previously enthusiastic supporters became quiet and talked among themselves, while antagonists muttered a few things about the fair board and BCRA, which can't be mentioned in polite society. We left the meeting and continued to prepare for our upcoming events.

The summer season at 'The Fairgrounds at Kutztown' yielded eight races run with four events canceled by rain. Winners of the June 4, 1997 opening events were Terry Schaeffer of Reading, PA in the 270 cc micro-sprints, and Craig Rochelle of Hackettstown, NJ won the Legends Car feature. In eight races run, Kevin Bastian of Emmaus, PA, and Bloomsburg, PA's Ray Bull were two-time winners. Bastian became the '97 micro-sprint track champion and Bull went on to fame as a multi-time ARDC midget champ. Single micro-sprint wins went to Terry Schaeffer, Brett Schoenly, hometown racer, Joel Eisenhower, and Randy West. In the Legends series, Shaun Carrig of Little Falls, NJ, and Wind Gap, PA's Zane Zeiner posted two wins each, with Carrig taking the 33-race 1997 Keystone Legends Tour championship. Craig Rochelle, Brian Levan, Paul Rochelle, and Bob Sell each won once at Kutztown and Brian Levan was named 1997 track champion.

At season's end, KLASCAR produced its fourth annual yearbook and both micro-sprint and Legend Car drivers alike gathered at the Copeechan Fish & Game Banquet Hall to celebrate the 1997 season and their individual accomplishments. Award winners were dressed in coats and ties and the ladies broke out their best dresses and heels. Anne Pouleson of the Checkered Flag Fan Club would have been proud of the dress code in effect. In addition to the points money and awards paid back to the 24th place in points, several special awards were presented, a practice followed in previous and subsequent KLASCAR banquets. Everyone had a fine evening.

Pete and I successfully promoted races at Kutztown through the 1999 season. After our encounter with the zoning board in 1997, a group of antagonists formed 'Kutztown Neighbors and Friends', complete with pro-

bono legal representation to sue the Kutztown Fairgrounds and BCRA to force an end to the racing programs. Our attorney was Lee Conrad, son of legendary Kutztown-based modified stock car champion, Vince Conrad. Richard Belzner represented the fair board. The case came up in Berks County court in June '98, but not before Lee Conrad advised the members of KN&F that he would be counter-suing each of them individually. If everyone needed a lawyer to settle this case, he wanted to insure every member of KN&F also incurred the expense of their own legal representation. Membership in KN&F dropped from nearly thirty to six prior to the trial.

Since there was no case law in Pennsylvania regarding this matter, the new law would be made with the decision. I did remember one case from my misspent youth reading Speed Age Magazine from a 1947 case from Olympic Stadium in Kansas City, MO dealing with complaints from the neighbors about racing conducted at the stadium. At the end of the day, the MO judge mused, 'If you can't conduct racing at the stadium, where can it be conducted?' The judge ruled in the stadium's favor.

During the initial testimony, Marcus Held and I invited the judge in the case to spend a Wednesday evening in Kutztown to see if some of the testimony of KN&F members was truthful. The next day in court, the judge debunked most of the testimony of KN&F and posed the same question to them as the MO judge. They could give no rational answer and, citing the fairgrounds' state-mandated responsibilities to present sporting events, his ruling reflected the absolute right of PA state-authorized fairgrounds to present auto racing events. Today our case is PA case law regarding the legality of presenting auto racing at state-recognized fairgrounds. At least that point will not have to be adjudicated in the future.

Pete and I often reminisce about our Kutztown project twenty-five years ago and we're glad to see Rich Tobias and Doug Rose continuing the tradition of racing at the Kutztown Fairgrounds.

**EARHS Open House-10 am to 5 pm
Sundays, April 24 & October 30, 2022
5080 Kernsville Road, Orefield, PA**

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Your monetary support in any denomination or donations of historically significant items, photos, documents, etc. toward projects undertaken by the EARHS are welcomed and encouraged. EARHS is recognized as a federally tax exempt charity by the IRS under Section 501c(3).

EARHS “wants and needs”

Wanted: Racing photo collections – share and preserve programs. If you have vintage racing photos, EARHS would like to be able to scan and copy these items. All items will be returned intact and we can provide you with a computer disc of those items from significant collections.

We are especially interested in Dorney Park items from the 1940's, 1950's, and 1960's and all Allentown Fair items, including indoor racing events, but all items are welcome.

Wanted: Unusual showcases and display cases. Often cases of unusual configuration can be used for displays of trophies and memorabilia.

Group tours of the EARHS showroom are available by appointment for civic and auto related groups, car clubs, etc.

Call 484 239-4145 or 610 395-5303 for details.

We continue to fill our showroom—all members are invited to visit and check our progress. Please call Pete Trumbauer (484 239-4145) or Paul Weisel (610 395-5303) to arrange a time to visit.