



Chautauque Sports Hall of Fame

JULY 2010

Help the Chautauque Sports Hall of Fame Build the Collection

A mission of the Chautauque Sports Hall of Fame is to preserve Chautauque County, New York sports history. You can help with that mission by sharing what you may know or have.

We are interested in collecting:

- Stories about sports in Chautauque County
- Photographs about sports in Chautauque County
- Artifacts related to sports in Chautauque County

Perhaps you have a story, photograph, document, newspaper article, memento, souvenir or letter you think would be of interest to the Hall of Fame. You don't need to donate it. We can make a copy and return the original to you. The memories and feats of our local athletes are best remembered and honored by sharing them. **If you can help keep Chautauque County sports history alive, contact Randy Anderson at 716-763-2173 or randy28b@netsync.net.**

A recent submission came from former Mayville, NY resident Phil Clark, now living in South Carolina, who shared a childhood memory of a special night at Stateline Speedway.

Stateline Speedway, Squirt Johns and my New Argus

By Phil Clark

May 30, 1959 started like every other Saturday in this quiet little corner of Chautauque County we call Mayville. It was Memorial Day. There was probably a parade down to the cemetery to honor our loved ones, but for me, a race crazy kid of 12, it was Saturday and that meant one thing, Stateline Speedway - two things if you count french fries - but this would not end like every other Saturday night.

Dad and I had gone to Westfield for some reason and I ended up at the W.T. Grant store on Main Street. As was the norm, I would walk through

the store, find something I wanted and if it wasn't too expensive he would buy it for me. This day my eyes fell upon an Argus camera outfit: camera, film, flashbulbs - the whole ball of wax. It was settled, and it was soon mine. Back in Mayville I remember thinking I would take it to the races and be a little Gordy Mahan, the official photographer at Stateline, and so I did.

It was a "50-lapper" as dad would say, but it was also the Gust Johnson Memorial race. As usual we went through the heat races, semis and the "consy". Now the feature race. It started as always, Jim Ponder throwing the green flag, cars bouncing through the first turn, roaring down the back stretch. Then the rains came and the race was stopped. When the red clay got wet it took some time to dry and most people thought the event would be postponed. We waited and sure enough the crew got the track back and the race resumed. Just as I had predicted, my man, Squirt Johns took the checkers.

As I stated before, most people thought postponement. That evidently included the press and even Gordy. Well, as was the ritual, fans were allowed on track to take pictures. There I was with my little Argus and the ONLY camera. Picture taken, dad and I started for the car when an announcement came over the loud speaker that asked for the boy who took the picture to come to the announcer's stand. Dad said, "That's you son," so back we went. They asked if they could buy the film and gave me \$5.00 for the whole roll. The first time I saw that picture I took was in the Jamestown paper. Next week I took the \$5.00 bill back to Stateline and had Squirt autograph it. Framed, with a copy of the picture, it hung on my bedroom wall for a good long time, until a teenage boy discovered the

next best thing to race cars - teenage girls.



So, as I remember it, I left Stateline 10 feet tall, and bullet-proof on that Saturday night in May of '59. Well that may be a little exaggerated, the 10 feet tall and bullet-proof part, but nobody can say I wasn't five dollars richer.

It is now 51 years since it happened but I can remember it as if was yesterday. Thanks for the memories, Squirt.