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*Honoring and Preserving the Sports History of Chautauqua County*

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## Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame

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15 West Third Street, Jamestown, NY 14701

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September 2016

### Auto Racing in Chautauqua County

When one thinks of the sport of auto racing in Chautauqua County the name Stateline Speedway comes immediately to mind. Stateline, which opened in 1956, recently celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Although Stateline Speedway is the only stock car track still operating in Chautauqua County, auto racing has a long and proud tradition in the sports history of our county.

In the 1950s there were numerous jalopy tracks operating in locations throughout Chautauqua County. Speedways near Forestville, Findley Lake, Dunkirk, Fredonia, Hanover, Gerry, Frewsburg, Panama, Sherman, Westfield, and Silver Creek were popular sources of family entertainment.



In the late 1930s and early 1940s Chautauqua County racing fans enjoyed the action at Satan's Bowl of Death (Busti) and at Jamestown Speedway (route 380 north of Kimball Stand).

But on September 6, 1941, 75 years ago, just three months before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the eyes of

auto racing fans in Chautauqua County were on the half-mile oval at the Chautauqua County Fairgrounds in Dunkirk...

## *Horn Set State Record in Chautauqua Auto Races*

*Dunkirk, Sept. 6 — A new state five-mile record for a half-mile dirt track and a series of accidents with one driver sent to the hospital, marked today's nationally-sanctioned automobile races at the Chautauqua County fairgrounds.*



*Ted Horn, Los Angeles, Cal, furnished the new state record in winning the first elimination heat for the victor sweepstakes in 4.14 1/2.*

*Fred Pierce of Medina, heaviest auto driver in the racing game, was the casualty. He suffered a wrenched knee and multiple bruises when his machine locked with the car of Keith Powell of Cheektowaga in the early stage of the second*

*elimination heat. Pierce was taken to Brooks Memorial Hospital, Dunkirk, in the Woelfle ambulance, on emergency duty at the track.*

*Horn went on from taking his elimination heat and hanging up a new state record to handily win the feature event, the ten-mile victory sweepstakes, in 11.10, with Joie Chitwood of Topeka, Kan., second; Bobby Sall of Paterson, N.J., third.*

*Heat number 1 (five miles) — Ted Horn, Los Angeles, Cal., first; Bobby Sall, Paterson, N.J., second; Bob Simpson, Cleveland, O., third; time, 4.14 1/2.*

*Heat number 2 (time taken on three miles due to accident) — Joie Chitwood, Topeka, Kan., first; Bill Spears, Pittsburg, Pa., second; Tommy Hinnershitz, Reading, Pa., third; time, 2.03 1/2, local three-mile record*

*Heat number 3 (five miles) — Keith Powell, Cheektowaga, first; Al Keller, LeRoy, second; Joe Schumaker, Akron, third; time, 5.18 1/2.*

*Summary final event: Victory Sweepstakes (ten miles) — Ted Horn, first; Joie Chitwood, second; Bobby Sall, third; Tommy Hinnershitz, fourth; Bob Simpson, fifth; time, 11.10. Spears, Powell, Keller and Schumaker also started.*

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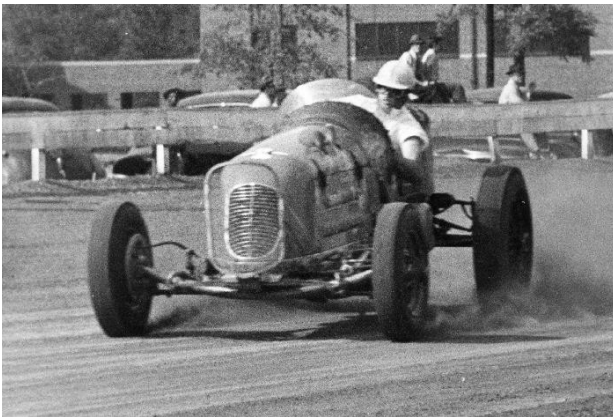
**Why were eyes of Chautauqua County race fans focused on this race? It was because Ted Horn was a star. He had finished no worse than fourth in the previous six Indianapolis 500s and here he was racing sprint cars in Dunkirk, NY.**



**Ted Horn** (February 27, 1910 – October 10, 1948), born **Eylard Theodore Von Horn**, was an [American race car driver](#). He won the [AAA National Championship](#) in 1946, 1947 and 1948 and collected 24 wins, 12 second-place finishes and 13 third-place finishes in 71 major American open-wheel races prior to his death at the [DuQuoin State Fairgrounds Racetrack](#) at the age of 38.

Ted Horn was born in [Cincinnati, Ohio](#). The family moved several times during Ted's childhood, finally settling in [Los Angeles](#). At 15 years of age Ted found work at the [Los Angeles Times](#) newspaper.

On his way to work one day Ted was pulled over for speeding. Try as he might Ted could not get out of this situation easily. The policeman gave him a fairly unusual punishment for the infraction. The young man was to travel to a race track called San Jose Speedway where usually there were more cars than drivers, then find a willing car owner to let him drive. Once he got all the speed he had out of his system he could pick up his impounded car. Ted would heed the advice of the policeman and would eventually return to pick up his car. But he found a new passion in [auto racing](#) and would never "get the speed he had out of his system."



When Ted began his racing career in earnest at a [California](#) race track called [Legion Ascot Speedway](#) he found he had much to learn as he usually was the slowest driver on the track. Eventually a few of the drivers gave him pointers on how to pick up his lap times which started to help develop his driving style. He suffered a serious racing accident which broke his foot and burned his back and kept him on the mend for several weeks. At the urging

of his parents he promised to abandon the sport. He fully intended to abide by his parents' wishes but after three years he began racing again.

Ted felt he now needed to travel to the Midwest and eastern parts of the [United States](#) where there were more race tracks and opportunities for a young race driver.

In 1934 in preparation for the Indianapolis 500 he practiced in a car called the Mick Special. However, Ted did not feel comfortable with the car and decided against trying to qualify it. Throughout that summer he campaigned a [sprint car](#) on a rigorous schedule once again in the East and Midwest. He was successful enough to attract the attention of [Harry Miller](#). [Preston Tucker](#) was putting together an ambitious effort with Harry Miller and the [Ford Motor Company](#) for the 1935 Indianapolis 500. When asked by Miller, Ted accepted a ride in one of the new Miller Ford V8 cars. He did make the field for the 1935 Indy 500. Unfortunately a flaw in the design of the car would eventually result in the steering gear in the car to eventually freeze up and the car being impossible to steer. Ted dropped out of the race after 145 laps, most of which was spent fighting the steering problem.



After his first Indy 500 Ted felt that he failed to make an impression. Former driver turned car owner [Harry Hartz](#) felt otherwise about the young driver and thought that he did an excellent job of driving under difficult circumstances. Hartz was impressed enough to offer Ted a chance to drive his car in the 1936 Indy 500, which Ted gladly accepted. Hartz, a consistent finisher in his years driving the

Indianapolis 500, took Ted under his wing. The combination Hartz and Horn was immediately a potent one as Ted would finish second on his first race with Hartz. He had two more Indianapolis 500 starts with the Hartz machine and finished third and fourth respectively.

He continued to race with great success through the 1930s, with second, third and fourth places at the [Indianapolis 500](#) and placing well in the championship standings.



He volunteered for World War II service but was rejected on the basis of his racing injuries. After the cessation of hostilities, racing began again on a limited basis in 1945, and Ted Horn won all seven races he entered that year. Further success came his way in the three subsequent years, giving him the National Championship in 1946, 1947 and 1948; this was the first three-time win. He never won the Indy 500, but achieved nine straight top-four finishes.

In a race at [DuQuoin, Illinois](#) on October 10, 1948, Ted Horn was involved in a serious accident during the second lap. He was taken to the hospital alive but died a short time later. He was 38.

- ♦ **Ted Horn has the best 10-year streak of finishes in Indianapolis 500 history.**

- ♦ Over his Indianapolis 500 career, Ted Horn completed 1944 out of a possible 2000 laps (97%).
- ♦ He was named to the [National Sprint Car Hall of Fame](#) in 1991.
- ♦ He was inducted in the [Motorsports Hall of Fame of America](#) in 1993.