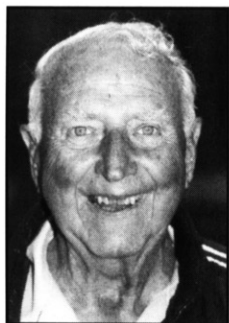


AUGUST "GUS" HOFFMAN



August "Gus" Hoffman
John Mahoney

August "Gus" Hoffman was born the seventh of eight children in Summerside, outside of Cincinnati, in Clermont County, Ohio, on October 27, 1910. His siblings were John, Flora, Bertha, Hazel, Arthur, Kathryn and Alvin. His father, whose German family name was Hoffmann, was a steamer trunk maker. According to Gus, "We were poorer than church mice, but we always had enough to eat. We had a pump from a cistern, an old pot-bellied stove, and an outhouse."

Eventually, the Hoffmans moved to a home in Cincinnati's Norwood district, where they had a furnace, running water and electricity. Says Gus, "We thought we were living high!"

Gus quit Norwood High School at age 16 in order to work and raise money for the family. He worked for the Leblond Machine Tool Company as a tool and die-maker. His ambition later allowed him to graduate from night school and the Littleford Business School.

In 1929, Gus and two classmates found an old car in a field and they made an a sprinter out of it. They raced it at unsanctioned events from Falmouth, Kentucky, to Greenville, Ohio, in the 1930's with Don Turner as their driver.

In 1941, at age 31, Gus married Jeannette Fussinger from Kennedy Heights. Said he, "I made my mind up that if I got married I was going to stay that way, but I always feared that I couldn't support my wife and any children that we might have."

Indeed, the following year, they began their family which would include sons Richard and Tom, and twin daughters Jennifer and Jean. Although Gus didn't serve in the Second World War, he did stay busy as he attained his real estate broker's license, worked for a realtor, and then started out on his own with his Suburban Realty and Builders business. He held government "priorities" to construct FHA homes and he was so besieged by prospective home buyers at the war's end that he could not keep pace with demand. Said Gus, "People would stand in line waiting to buy houses, but I could never find enough material to build them."

He partially solved this problem by standing in Cincinnati and hauling lumber trucks from Tennessee and Kentucky that were bound for other cities like Columbus. Said he, "I'd offer them more money per thousand than those who had ordered it originally, and I'd pay cash on the spot. I never wrote a check."

Thus, a new venture, Park Lumber was born. Around the same time, the late Forties and early Fifties, Hoffman campaigned a Hal-powered sprinter with "Tex" Shackleford as his driver at tracks like Dayton in Ohio, and Winchester, Salem and Converse in Indiana.

In the mid-Fifties, Gus sold the Hal and purchased a 101-cubic-inch KurtisKraft midget, the fabled ebony 7. The ultra-successful car had previously been owned by Walter Pew of Philadelphia, Clarence "Mutt" Anderson of Xenia, and Bill Weaver of Dayton. Anderson, a perfectionist and mechanical wizard, continued to maintain the car for Gus. Andy Linden and Eddie Sachs were two of the drivers who wheeled the Park Lumber Special for Gus and Mutt.

Sachs, it seems, was always a favorite of Hoffman's. Says Gus, "One time Sachs had a three lap lead in the Dayton 100-lap race that paid lap money. Everytime he'd go past the starting line, he'd pull down on what seemed to be an imaginary rope. We were trying to slow the meathead down, and after he'd won the race I said, 'Sachs, what in the hell were you signaling about?' He says, 'Don't you know? Everytime I went by I was punching the cash register!'"

Added Gus, "He was a clown. But I loved that guy. God, how I loved him!"

In 1956, Gus sold the "little black jewel" midget and

bought the Eddie Kuzma-built sprinter in which Cecil Green had lost his life in '51. Anderson restored the car to its original condition, as it looked as the J.C. Agajanian number 98, and Gus raced it before selling it to Charlie "Bud" Wilmot in 1964. Mutt was the chief mechanic, and Gus also allowed him to hire the drivers. In 1957, Gus Hoffman finished sixth in United States Auto Club (USAC) Midwest car owner points with his Hoffman Offy number 98. Don Branson was the driver, and with him, Gus earned his first USAC win that year at New Bremen, Ohio.

Gus moved up to fourth in the 1958 USAC Midwest owner point standings with his Park Lumber Special. Again, Branson powered the car to a win at Winchester.

In 1959, Bud Tingelstad drove the Park Lumber Special and Gus finished fifth in USAC Midwest points.

The next season, USAC's last with its regional sprint car championships, Hoffman had the opportunity to hire a young midget driver named A.J. Foyt, but Mutt didn't think he was ready for the more powerful sprints. Foyt won that year's Eastern division points, while Hoffman, with Al Miller driving his Chevy, placed 12th in 1960 USAC Midwest owner points and 22nd in the East.

In 1961, Gus put Jim Hemmings of North Vernon, Indiana, in the Park Lumber Special and together they won at Salem. Hoffman wound up 19th in USAC's national points.

The next year, the car was renamed the Fireside Builders Special after Hoffman's successful business. Gus finished 21st in USAC national car owner points in 1962.

In 1963, Gus finished 31st in USAC car owner points with his Hoffman Offy. Starting in 1964, Richard "Dick" Hoffman, or "Dickie" as the "Old Timer" called him, was listed as the owner. However, even today, Gus and Dick co-own Dynamics, Inc., aptly doing business as Hoffman Auto Racing.

The late Sixties were a busy time for Gus Hoffman, besides his racing efforts. In late 1968, a savings and loan business, of which Gus was a director, was located next to Hoffman's real estate company and it lost its management team in a plane crash. Gus made the offer to the other directors and officers to oversee the operation for the short term, and they accepted. In doing so, he shrewdly turned its sixty-odd delinquent accounts around with only one foreclosure. In time, he was named vice-president of Midwest Savings Association, which thrived with his "Ten Percent Passbook" program and his other initiatives. 1967 Xavier University graduate Dick then took over Fireside Realty and Builders.

The Hoffman family racing team started the Seventies slowly, finishing 17th in USAC car owner points. This frustrating period saw Dick assume more control over the management of the team. However, in 1971, they teamed with Larry "Boom Boom" Cannon and he powered their car to wins at Cincinnati and Reading, Pennsylvania. They placed ninth in points.

In 1972, Cannon again won in their car, this time at Ascot Park, and they finished seventh in points. The next year they finished 13th in points, with Pep Gas Treatment on board as a sponsor. In 1974, Cannon won with the Hoffman sprinter at Earl Baltes' Eldora Speedway in Rossburg, Ohio.

1973 also marked the start of Gus Hoffman's Indy Car efforts with his family. They competed in the 1974 and '76 Indy 500's with Cannon, finishing 24th and 17th, respectively. They ran again in 1978 and '79 with Joe Saldana, finishing 15th and 16th. Also, in '79, George "Ziggy" Snider finished 33rd in a second Hoffman entry. In 1982, Jerry Sneva finished 23rd.

The Hoffmans had actively campaigned Indy Cars from 1973 through '84. Due to the commitment involved, including races in England, they did not race USAC sprint cars from 1979 through 1986. When they came back to USAC sprints after Gus had sold his company and "retired" in '86, they found the sport had changed. The traditional non-wing club even tried adding the wings to their cars for a while in the '80s, much to the chagrin of the "Old Timer". However, in 1987 and '88, they came back strong with drivers like Andy Hillenbrand, Kerry Norris, Rocky Hodges and Kevin "Pup" Huntley.

And things really came together for them during the winter of 1988-89, when Dick's son Rob built a radical V-6 Buick-powered pavement USAC sprinter for Rich Vogler. In '89, Rich Vogler won at Marne, Michigan; Clermont, Indiana (twice); Winchester; and Moberly, Missouri (with a wing). They were the 1989 USAC national champions.

In late July of 1990, on a weekend when Gus and Dick were back in Ohio with Gus' dying wife, Rich Vogler was fatally injured while leading the USAC feature race at Salem aboard the family sprinter. It was a tough loss for the Hoffman and Vogler families, USAC, and sprint car racing in general.

Steve Butler raced with the Hoffman's for the remainder of the early 1990's, achieving much success. They were third in car owner points in 1991, and won the coveted title in 1992 with Butler as their driver.

Steve was followed in 1993 by defending driver champion Robbie Stanley, who went out and won the USAC car owner title again for the Hoffman family that year.

Three-time defending USAC champion and 1994 point leader Robbie Stanley died on May 26 at Winchester while driving for the Hoffman family. Again, the loss was extremely tough for all involved and the sport as a whole.

In 1995, the Hoffmans again finished second in USAC car owner points, with drivers Terry Shepherd, Kenny Irwin, Mark Cassella, Derek Davidson and Dave Darland.

For the next two years, 1996 and '97, their primary drivers were Dave Darland on dirt and Andy Michner on pavement. The first year Jim Mahoney supported their pavement program, as Pat Abold did the second year. Both years the Hoffman were champions amongst the USAC car owners.

In 1998, Hoffman Auto Racing finished second in USAC points. Last year, August "Gus" Hoffman and Hoffman Auto Racing won their sixth Stoops Freightliner USAC national sprint car point championship, with Dave Darland as the driver of their Kroger/Pringles/Sunny Delight sprinter. According to the year 2000 USAC Yearbook, from 1956 through 1999, Gus, Dick and his son Rob, Tom and the entire Hoffman Auto Racing/Dynamics, Inc. team have won 45 USAC feature events. That is second only to Steve Stapp with 51 wins, and two ahead of Johnny Vance's Aristocrat Products team of Dayton.

According to Gus, "I'm too far over eighty to admit how far over I am. Nowadays, some people call me 'Grandpa'. Others call me 'Old Timer'. Can't say much, 'cause I'm both. I began owning race cars in the 1920's. Once in a while, somebody will actually remember my first USAC sprint car win at New Bremen with Don Branson doing the driving on September 8, 1957. That's a few days ago, wouldn't you say? When you get my age, you turn into more of a tinkerer than a worker. But I do as much as I can. I always will. 'Til I can't."

Today, Gus lives on 200 acres of farm country in Milford. He loves getting together with his family. And he still loves the challenge of owning a sprint car. Said he, "I've never had a dull moment in my life, whether it be in a job, in business, or in racing. Life to me is a challenge. I've always wanted to do a little better than I did yesterday or the day before."

In addition to the drivers listed above, the following have also raced for August "Gus" Hoffman and his family over the years in various divisions: Dave Norris, Chuck Engle, Chuck Arnold, Don "Snooky" Bullock, Bob Harkey, Dick Gaines, Dee Jones, Hal Minyard, Bob King, Ronnie Duman, Bobby Black, Norm Brown, Gil Hess, "Doc" Dawson, Merle Bettenhausen, Dennis "Duke" Cook, Don Thomas, Al Smith, Johnny Parsons, Jr., Tom Bigelow, Tom York, Gary Ponzini, Bill Puterbaugh, Norman "Bubby" Jones, Duane "Pancho" Carter, Jr., Steve Cannon, Jan Opperman, Clark Templeman, Karl Busson, Billy Vukovich III, Rob Hoffman, Jeff Gordon, Cary Faas, Tony Stewart, Jay Drake, Brad Armstrong, Rex Easton, Ed Elisian, Don Hewitt, "Shorty" Templeman, Len Sutton, Elmer George, Dick Rathman, Rodger Ward, Jimmy Davis, Bob Vieth, Tom Bigelow, Sammy Sessions, Dick Ferguson, A.J. Shepard, Tony Lentz, Spike Gehlhausen, Tim Richmond, Brian Tyler, Rodney Combs, Doug Kalitta, Paul "Potsy" Goacher, Jerry Grant, Jeff Bloom and Todd Gibson.