

The Indianapolis Motor Speedway Hall of Fame

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The Indianapolis Motor Speedway Hall of Fame (IMSHF) is located at 4790 West 16th Street, Indianapolis, IN 46222. Hours are from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., EST, 364 days (closed Christmas Day). Admission is \$2 per person with free entry for those aged 16 and under. The museum has two gift shops featuring a variety of officially licenced Indy 500, Brickyard 400 (an early August NASCAR race), and Championship Driver's Merchandise. Telephone numbers are museum (317) 484-6747, gift shop (317) 484-6760, ticket office (317) 484-6700, hotel (317) 241-2500, and golf (317) 484-6572.

The first Hall of Fame Museum (hereafter referred to as the IMSHF) was established in 1956 by the late Tony Hulman and Karl Kizer, the museum's first director. In 1975, Hulman supervised the construction of a larger, more modern museum within the Speedway oval. Its opening coincided with the United States Bicentennial celebratin in 1976. In 1987, the museum and Speedway grounds were honored with the designation of National Historic Landmark.

Now 21 years old, the facility constructed of precast cement and Wyoming quartz, has approx. 30,000 square feet of museum display space (with more than 60,000 square feet for administrative offices).

Beginning with the first 500 in 1911, each race has begun with a "running start. "This is achieved by a pace car, leading the field in the pace lap, permitting gradual acceleration to race speeds while maintaining qualifying positions. As the pace car leaves the track, the race cars are released to begin the race when the green flag drops.

The first exhibition case at the IMSHF is full of models of the various pace cars featured at the Indy 500 over the years. There is an automobile design for every taste ranging from DeSoto and Studebaker to Camaro, Mercury, Cadillac, and Chevrolet. In the next case are models of the actual Indy race winners. There is a replica of the Duesenberg 12 Murphy Special, the only car to win both the Indianapolis 500 (1922) and the French Grand Prix at LeMans (1921).

In subsequent theme or category areas are varied collections on Speedway

Credentials in which 1909 arm bands were replaced in the 1930s with a combination of metal badges, numbered back-up cards and arm bands specifically designed to monitor controlled access so critical for spectator safety; the evolution of hats with 1922 driver Jimmy Murphy looking more like a links golfer with a floppy hat, while “Duke” Nalon’s 1949 headgear looks remarkably similar to the “hard hats” worn by modern day equestrian riders; the career and exploits of Rick Mears a four-time Indy winner in 1979, 1984, 1988, and 1991; the official race day programs priced at 10 cents in 1918 and 25 cents (“pay no more attention than this”) in 1926; the life and career of Eddie Rickenbacker, a World War I fighter ace who drove at Indy and owned the race track from August 15, 1927, until November 14, 1945, when he sold it to Terre Haute businessman, Tony Hulman; and the final exhibition case on the east wall of the IMSHF spotlights the life of speedway owner Tony Hulman who is credited with making the words “Gentlemen, start your engines” into a war cry of anticipation, arousal, and anticipation for tense drivers and the nearly 400,000 spectators.

The north wall of the IMSHF is dominated by a series of bold pencil sketches of each and every Indy 500 champion from Ray Harrouin in 1911 (average speed of 74.602 mph) to Jacques Villeneuve in 1995 (average speed of 153.61 mph). The ongoing debate and controversy over sport and cigarette advertising, while not yet addressed by the IMSHF, must impact forcefully on the most casual of observers. The portraits of Emerson Fittipaldi (1989 and 1993), Arie Luyendyk (1990), Rick Mears (1991), and Al Unser, Jr. (1994) are dominated with the Marlboro trademark logo. Above these portraits are a series of color posters advertising global auto races such as Sweden’s Polar Grand Prix (1975) and the Paris-Alger-Dakar (1987). The links to the Indy 500 race are unclear and the material, while easy on the eye, seems primarily employed as an eye catching space filler.

Among the Indy 500 winners is the “old couple”—Scotsman Jim Clark (1965) and Englishman Graham Hill (1966). They were intense rivals in Formula 1 (Grand Prix Racing) throughout Europe and battled one another for the title of World Champion. Both drivers were ecstatic about their Indy 500 victories and the IMSHF ignores a remarkable opportunity to highlight the internationalism of the event. Publicity personnel attached to the IMS constantly claim that the Indy 500 is the world’s premier auto race. No better support for this statement is to be found than the fact that the two foremost race drivers in the world, Clark and Hill, thought that their reputation was completed and consolidated only with their Indy triumphs. Business historians would have an interest in the Roger Ward (1962 winner) sketch. This is the first portrait to include an advertising logo on the race uniform.

The IMSHF’s forte is the splendid array of physical artifacts. The scope of the material culture is unique. These are exemplars of machines made magical. There is the synthesis of power, beautiful lines, and workmanship. There is beauty and function. Each racing shell, chassis, and engine represents the combined skill of many people. There is a total collection of more than 300 vehicles at the IMSHF. Among these is the 1911 winner of the 500, the Marmon Wasp, driven

to victory by Ray Harroun. It was recently included in a postage stamp in the U.S. Postal Service's Transportation Series. There are four two-time winning cars, the Boyle Maserati (Wilbur Shaw 1939-1940), the Blue Crown Spark Plug Special (Mauri Rose 1947-48), the Fuel Injection Special (Bill Vukovich 1953-54), and the Belond Special (Sam Hanks 1957 and Jimmy Bryan 1958). There are also the four cars driven to victory by A.J. Foyt, Jr., including his 1977 machine that represented his record breaking fourth victory.

Nevertheless, not all of the automobiles are of the Indy 500 oeuvre. There is a 1966 Form Mark II-B that performed well in the Daytona Continental, the 12 Hours of Sebring, the 24 Hours of LaMans, and the 1000 Kilometer Spa. Next door to it is the gloriously contoured Mercedes Benz racer that swept Juan Fangio to his Formula One World Championships in 1954 and 1955. Neither vehicle ever raced at Indy. The fact that they are owned by the IMP seems insufficient cause to feature them in a Hall of Fame spotlighting the machines, heroes, and traditions of an American race held annually in May.

The IMSHF struggles to capitalize on the educational potential offered by the splendid sea of more than 30 Indianapolis 500 winning cars. One exception is a mid-museum exhibit titled "A Behind the Scenes Look." This easily read and attractively illustrated stand highlights the importance of the pit-stop. It is pointed out that a pit crew has 10 members at each station at "Gasoline Alley" (the name given at Indy to the extensive pit area) as well as significant others such as spotters high up on observation towers. The tires (either manufactured by Firestone or Goodrich) weigh from 16 to 29 pounds and cost \$1200 per set. Approximately 28-44 tires are allowed to be changed during the race. A perfect change, four new tires and a full tank of methanol, can be compressed into 13 seconds. A pit stop is not just for tires and fuel. Adjustments can be made to the vehicles chassis and how it "rides," onboard computers may be checked, and the driver is given liquid refreshment. To enter, stop, and exit the pit stop via the warm-up lane can be accomplished in 35 to 45 seconds. Such changes are hugely important. In the 1997 Indy 500 Arie Luyendyk and Scott Goodyear "pitted" (in first and second place) at virtually the same time, and at a critical stage in the race with less than ten laps to go. The Luyendyk pit crew were able to maintain the "Flying Dutchman's" slim lead. When the race concluded after 200 laps his margin of victory was half a second—about four car lengths.

The Hall of Fame was created in 1952 for the purpose of perpetuating the names and memories of outstanding personalities in racing and the development of the automobile industry. A distinctive Hall of Fame medallion is awarded to each inductee, while their names (102 of them) are inscribed on a permanent roll of honor placed in the middle of the west wall of the IMSHF.

Of considerable interest for engineer specialists is the area of the IMSHF that focuses on the evolution of engine design. There are cleverly captioned displays on Harry Miller (1875-1943), "the high priest of performance," and Frank Curtis, "the Dean of American Race Car Builders." The latter built five Indy winners and more than 60 Indy racers.

A disappointment of the IMSHF were its various video booths. The sound quality was poor and the attempts at thematic analysis disorganized. One video was headlined “Close Finishes.” The “who, why, and wherefore” was unclear. The editing was less than professional. Another video featured Indy legend A.J. Foyt. Again the material was poorly selected and disjointed. A third video stand attempted to examine Indy “Innovations” and a fourth video featured “Safety.” Happily, there was the compensation of the 48-seat Hulman Theatre, located within the IMSHF, which showed a 30-minute highlights film. The quality of the picture and the sound was good and there was no additional admission fee.

Not surprisingly the IMSHF ignores the most burning controversy in Indy racing and that is the 1996 schism. This bitter division of the sport—for a series of complex and convoluted economic and philosophical reasons—has created two rival leagues. One group, the Indy Racing League, led by IMF president Tony George, run their own race series headed by the Indy 500. The rival group, called the Championship Auto Racing Team (CART) run a totally separate racing series. Thus on the day prior to the scheduled running of the Indy 500 (the IRL group), the CART conglomerate staged the Motorola 300 at the Gateway International Raceway in St. Louis. Paul Tracy, a Canadian who won this race, lays the finger of blame on Tony George. In a newspaper interview he spoke of George ignoring “the best drivers and the best teams.” Conversely, Indy icon A.J. Foyt was quoted as saying “nothing can compare with the atmosphere of the Indy 500.”

Sports Illustrated columnist Ed Hinton, in his pre-race analysis of the 1997 Indy 500, categorized the CART/IRL dispute as a “silly internecine war” and wondered whether the greatest automobile race in the world “lay, if not dying, then certainly on life support.” John Sondergreger of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* applied a baseball motif to his interpretation of the feud. “You can enjoy the Indy cars of CART as the major-league sport and the Indy cars of the IRL as the Class AAA sport.”

In terms of exploring reserach/writing opportunities, the following two contact persons are helpful and accomodating facilitators. They are Bill York of the IMS Media Center, (317-247-8500) and Jim Hoggatt (317-484-6744) at the IMSHF Library (only open by special request). The library contains the full records of each Indy 500 race since 1981 complete with driver biographies and data regarding the racing cars which competed. While there are only 3,000 volumes of automotive and racing history, the scope and depth of the holdings is surprisingly good. Although many sports histories are in print on Formula One racing, there is a very real window of opportunity for a definitive history of the Indy 500. An untapped research source is the photographic archives which houses approximately four million negatives and slides from racing activities since 1911.

Mark D. Howell in his 1997 book *From Moonshine to Madison Avenue* describes the IMS as the “shrine of open-wheeled action.” Karl B. Raitz in the opening chapter to his 1995 volume *The Theater of Sport* analyzes the concept of spectacle at the Indy 500. He writes, “spectacle is an excellent word choice because

it addresses precisely the values embedded in the idea of landscape ensemble as a source of attraction and gratification in sporting events.” A most helpful source in helping to interpret the socio-cultural nature of the Indy 500 is an essay by Judith L. Kapferer in the 1994 book *The Cultures of Celebration* edited by Ray B. Brown and Michael Marsden. Despite Kapferer analyzing the Australian Grand Prix (Formula One auto racing) her label of the sport as epitome of “high technology and high speed” is most apt for the Indy 500. Her views on social control would be appropriate for Indianapolis and the IMS environs on race day.

“The changed regulations of [the race] . . . include, on the one hand, a relaxation of liquor licensing laws and the other hand, a restriction in the movement of local traffic. The latter is the price people pay for the former; and in most cases we willingly do so, taking on the worship of speed and motion, which gives us a brief illusion of autonomy and freedom while being, in fact, severely confined.”