

**FARMINGTON VOL. FIRE DEPT.
And
RESCUE SQUAD**

By raycer 27



On race night, the track would open its gates to the drivers and their crews and the many fans that came to watch their favorite drivers compete against one another. As we all know, there were thrills and spills, rollovers, drivers hitting the fence, some going *over* the fence. Some would sustain an injury in the pits, working on their cars. At times there were people in the stands that required medical attention. The point is, the races could not be run unless the fire trucks and ambulance

crews were there.

The photo on the right was typical of any race night at Pleasantville Speedway, the crew helping a driver out of his overturned car. The ambulance you see in the photo was the first Farmington Ambulance connected to the Fire Company; it covered all the area tracks



including the Atco Speedway back in the 50's.



I will speak for myself here; when I first started driving, I would see that the ambulance and fire trucks were in place in the infield and it would be nothing more than a casual glance and a mental note that they were there, until the first time that I hit

the fence and rolled over. I remember that I had just stopped rolling and was trying to collect my thoughts and this guy pops his head in and says "Are you ok buddy, just take it easy and we'll get ya' outta there"! Then he asked if the power and fuel was shut off. I don't know who the person was but he was definitely a professional and knew the correct procedures.

After that incident I had a newfound respect for the fire and rescue crews knowing if anything serious happened to me or my competitors, we would be in capable hands.



So let's meet some of the members of the fire/rescue teams and some of the problems that *they* faced over the years. Chief Tom Mc Andrews presents Charlie Angerman with a trophy for a feature win at a special event race back in the late 50's.

Fred Slunt Sr. was fire chief for 13 years; he started with the company in 1958 and one

night in 1972, while carrying a fire extinguisher, coming to the aid of a driver who was involved in an accident, suffered a fatal heart attack and passed away at the track.



There were several Fred Slunt Memorial races held in his honor in the years to come. The photo in the inset was the 4th anniversary of Fred's death; in the photo, the flag has been lowered to half mast in his honor.



Fred Slunt Jr. started as a junior Fireman at the age of 13 and later became a regular Fireman, then a Chief until he was age 39, he is now a lifetime member.

Jim Habermehl was also a fire chief and owned the maroon and white #73 that he campaigned at the track. (Inset photo, Chief Jim Garth and Eric Peterson, raising the flag).

Some other members of the fire rescue team were Chief Jim Garth, Asst. Chief Claude Nelson 1st Lieutenant Lonny Price, Bob Eccles, Chief Paul Herold, and John Flanagan.

The photo to the right shows Ann Fagerlund readying an injured participant for transport to a nearby hospital. Also with the ambulance squad were Dave Bradford, Ralph Price, Johnny Price Fred Fagerlund, Tom Flanagan, his brother, Jimmy Flanagan, and George Laigaie.



Now in the beginning, the fire rescue teams donated their time as a courtesy when it was only a one night race event but as the track grew and they added more nights and events, the cost was exceeding the budget allowance for them to be there, plus the addition of another ambulance so the races could go on while the other took the injured party to the hospital; otherwise they couldn't continue the races until the ambulance returned and they were lengthy delays that nobody liked.

After some haggling back and forth, the promoter agreed to pay them \$100.00 per event to have the entire crew on hand and without those people there wouldn't have been races of any kind as it was a mandatory state law that required them to be there.

In the photo to the right, David Bradford climbs over the fence to help a driver who went over the wall and down in the ditch.

The guys in the department also had a fun side to them, they built this old car they called "Lumpty Lump" and took it to parades, the stock car races and various other functions; they even sprayed for mosquitoes with the darn thing!



It had one rim welded to another a couple of inches offset which produced the wobbly effect, then they put a line into the header pipe that they dumped oil into, to make it smoke. Some also called it "old smokey", it was always a big hit with the kids, no matter what the function was.

In this photo, you see the car with Bob Eccles in the front, Fred Jr. with his dad sitting next to him with the sunglasses on in the driver's seat.

I don't think you can appreciate

how comical this creation was unless you actually saw it run at a particular function. Some of the guys with mechanical ability would tinker with it in their spare time. Here, you see Paul Herold driving and Jimmy Habermehl riding shotgun running "old smokey" around the track during the intermission, putting on a little show



for the fans. That may seem hokey and boring to some, but believe me, these were the good years back then and things weren't as complicated and fast paced as they are today. It was a simpler, easier way of life.

The next photo shows Parker Bohn, driver of Tom Skinner's 659, getting some help from the crew to get out of his overturned car. The other photo is an accident between John Giacobbe in the M-1 and Marty Shellhaus in the 3 M; 1st Lieutenant Lonny Price looks over to see if anyone else needs assistance. All three drivers were ok, with no serious injuries.

I must thank all the members on the



Fire/Rescue teams and my statisticians, who were able to supply me with the data I needed to get their story told.



This was an area that I was not familiar with.

I hope you will remember these people who got your favorite driver pulled from an accident, putting out a fire, people injured in the pits or giving aid to a fan in the stands. They also, like race drivers, are a special breed and loved what they did and some still do.

So the next time you go to a race track, maybe you'll agree that they are definitely a valuable asset but not just for the racers, they're there for everyone.

Thanks guys and gals for being there for all those years!
