

## **"Suntan Sultan" Larry Voss To Be Honored By GSVSCC**

The driver that was nicknamed "The Atlantic City Suntan Sultan" is going into the prestigious Garden State Vintage Stock Car Club Hall of Fame. That's Larry Voss, a hard-charging "hired gun" dirt and paved track Modified driver, who will be inducted into the GSVSCC's Hall on Sunday afternoon, March 25, 2012.

Also being inducted into the Hall during ceremonies that day at the Branches Banquet Center in West Long Branch, N.J., will be Wall 1950s-60s Modified driving standout Dave Hulse (deceased); the late dirt Modified car owner Jim Fodor (who fielded the No. 13) and *Area Auto Racing News* staff photographer Jim Smith.

The banquet/award ceremony is open to everyone, not just GSVSCC members. Tickets, at \$45 each, may be purchased, and banquet information obtained, by contacting event coordinator Eleanor Hagerman at (732)-222-4408.

Also receiving special recognition from the GSVSCC during the March 25 event will be aforementioned Joe MacFarlan (founder and curator of the *3widespicturevault.com* historic racing website), who will receive the "Bob 'B.T.' Thomas Spirit of the Sport" award that honors that late New Jersey-based racing mechanic and all-around "good guy"; and veteran and versatile race drivers Nick Cottone (Lifetime Achievement) and Jack Duffy (Jim Delaney Memorial Award for Dedication to New Jersey racing).

The GSVSCC was founded in 1991 with the purpose of preserving New Jersey's rich stock car racing history. It has its Hall of Fame Museum on site at N.J.'s famed Wall Stadium, and is open to fans to visit on each Wall race night. The GSVSCC also annually has an informative exhibit at the Motorsports Show at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center in Oaks, Pa. The GSVSCC also had a display at the recent West Long Branch (N.J.) Fire Company hall during that group's racing movie show presented by the Fillimon brothers.

One of the prime examples of the mission of the Garden State Vintage Stock Car Club is that Hall of Fame. And, Larry Voss is certainly a deserving candidate. He raced at many speedways, in the 1950s, 60s and mid-70s, using his South Jersey (Absecon) home as his base.

South Jersey racing historian Russ Dodge noted that in the 24 years that Larry competed, he had 42 feature wins at 21 different tracks; and, as an example of that "hired gun" type of racer, was at the wheel of some 50 different stock cars!

Among the memorable Modifieds that he ran, on the dirt, were the Diamond 3 sedan; the Mushroom Special No. 6 Jr., Jim Schoffstall's No. 16, the Turner Brothers No. 47, and Jay Stong's No. 505.

Larry began racing at Pleasantville Speedway (Atlantic City), not

far from his home, in 1954 while running his own No. 15. He won 18 features at "P'ville", a flat half-mile paved oval, and the 1960 championship. In that same era, he competed at N.J.'s nearby Atco Speedway (third-mile paved oval), driving the Modified No. 25 fielded by Ted Erke. Larry was a nine time career winner at Atco, and between that track and Pleasantville was quickly recognized for his talents.

Vineland Speedway was also nearby, and Larry soon became one of that half-mile oval's top racers as well. He was its 1956 Sportsman champion, driving the Pat Farabella No. 56W; and also became a Modified titlist at Vineland while running Walter Woodland No. 95A.

In 1958, also won a "Langhorne Qualifier" feature that enabled him to represent Vineland in that year's Race of Champions on the Langhorne dirt mile circle.

Already established as a pavement standout, Larry had also competed on dirt at another famed South Jersey track, Alcyon Speedway in Pitman. That track closed in 1960, about the time that Larry was ready for his next challenge. He became a dirt Modified regular, and "hit the road."

During the week, Larry was employed as a lineman by the Atlantic City Electric Company. He put in plenty of long hours during the week, then would head out on to race in Pennsylvania at Reading (Friday), Hatfield (Saturday) and Nazareth (Sunday).

"Larry may have 'raced full-time', but he was never a 'full time racer'! He put his family and work first," emphasized Russ Dodge.

"When he went to Hatfield, Larry found success with the Turner Brothers Trucking number 47 car," recalled Russ. "With Stan Malamut working on it, Larry set a 25-lap record at Hatfield.

"He is also very proud of his three wins at Reading," emphasized Russ. It was at Reading where that track's fabled announcer, Warren Ruffner, gave Larry that popular "Suntan Sultan" nickname in reference to his home base being Atlantic City.

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"Larry actually started out racing from Beasley Point (N.J.) and later moved to Absecon, New Jersey," said Russ.

The first of those Reading Modified triumphs for Larry Voss came on August 28, 1964, while at the wheel of that Turner No. 47, when he bested Central PA Supermodified "Bug" driving great Ray Tilley.

In 1967, within two weeks of one another, Larry raced to his next two feature wins at Reading. Both were accomplished while at the wheel of the No. 16 fielded by Jim Schoffstall. In that first win of 1967 he bested Dick "Toby" Tobias; while two weeks later Larry outran Budd Olsen.

"A couple of weeks later in 1967, Larry finished third in the (season-ending) Daniel Boone 200," recalled Russ Dodge. "But those who watched the race said that lapped traffic factored in and potentially took away what could have been his most prestigious win."

Reportedly, that day Voss was just as fast as eventual winner Stan Ploski Jr. -- to the degree that he stayed, for many laps, right on the rear bumper of leader Ploski. But Larry had lost a lap earlier. When the checkered waved he was charging in third, all the while having attempted to pass Ploski to get back on the lead lap.

Although Larry competed on the dirt Modified circuit into the 1970s, his last full-time season at Reading was in 1970 when he ran the Mushroom Special No. 6 Jr.

Along with the aforementioned tracks, Voss also competed at, among other ovals, N.J.'s paved Old Bridge, Wall and the Trenton mile oval; and on dirt at Allentown, Pa.

Today, Larry Voss is retired from his "day job" and also race driving, and spends winters in Florida. He still enjoys "Jersey summers", while visiting with his many friends in the north. That includes "race story lunches" with Russ Dodge and his friends!

If Larry has one regret, it's that by the time he became the driver of some of the "premier" rides on the circuit, those cars were "on the way out" and didn't give him the performance that they were previously known for. But, always a true racer, he got 100 percent out of them, and was always respected and popular with the fans.

Proof of his ability to run with the best is his record at Reading. For any driver to win once there was impressive, given the competition. Larry Voss, as noted, had three triumphs on that oval. Importantly, the Reading record books show that he had 20 finishes in the top-five and was in the top-10 on 36 occasions.

Like so many drivers, once he "hung up the helmet," he stayed away from the race tracks. But, he still, then and now, maintains a strong interest in the sport.

“One of the things about Larry, is that you can rely on his ‘historic’ view of a race, *any* race, that he was in,” said Russ Dodge, with a laugh. “When he relates his racing stories he always say, for example, ‘I was running fourth’ when that happened. Many other ‘old timers’ might say that they ‘were leading every race they were in’! Not Larry. He is sharp with his racing memory, and the accounts of races that he was in are always accurate and extremely interesting!”

Russ added that there was another important side to Larry Voss.

“The only thing closer to Larry than racing is his family,” stated Russ. “No matter what was going on with his racing career, he looked after his family and took them to the tracks when he could. Yes, his wife Chris and the family are the main joy in Larry’s life.”

In fact, Larry’s son, Barry Voss, was a very fine dirt Modified driver for many years on the local tracks.

That’s part of what makes Larry Voss a true “Hall of Famer” in racing, and in his life. A soft-spoken gentleman, who isn’t given to bragging, he will be recognized for his accomplishments by the Garden State Vintage Stock Car Club at their Hall of Fame gala on March 25.