

AARN's Herb Anastor, Steve Bubb To Speak On Open Wheel Madness In Watkins Glen, NY

Two longtime members of the AARN Staff – feature writer Herb Anastor and columnist Stephen Bubb – will be speaking at the International Motor Racing Research Center in Watkins Glen, New York, on Saturday March 23 on two topics that deal with early oval-track racing in a program entitled, “Open Wheel Madness.”

Board Track Auto Racing was an exciting, ultra-fast and dangerous form of AAA National Championship Racing and Anastor will talk about what took place on the 24 high-banked, high-speed wooden race tracks that were part of the American racing scene from 1910-1931.

The Board Tracks – which were often referred to as “wooden wonders” – were anywhere from one-half-mile to 2 miles in size and they were in all respects a motorsports marvel.

And Anastor will speak about the men who raced on them – such as Barney Oldfield, Ralph DePalma, Louis & Gaston Chevrolet, Jimmy Murphy, Tommy Milton, Harry Hartz, Peter DePaolo, Leon Duray and Louis Meyer – and the stock-based cars that were used during the early years (1910-1919) and the exquisite and purpose-built Millers and Duesenbergs that were used to make national headlines in the later years (1920-1931).

In addition, Anastor will touch on such varied Board Track topics as: the cost and construction factors that went into the tracks and the cars; media coverage of the races and racers; the technical development of the period; and, the factors that led to Board Track Auto Racing's popularity and its eventual demise.

In many respects, the drivers who competed on the Board Tracks were major sports personalities and their cars were the top of that line. But there were also racers who competed during this period in a more-local form of the sport and Bubb will

address that topic.

The main focus of Bubb's presentation will be on Short-Track Racing in the 1920s and 1930s and how that segment of the sport grew following the end of World War I. And he will also highlight the career of the great DePalma and the interesting cost of his racing program.

Bubb also will talk about the local drivers that challenged the stars – including the drivers Deacon Litz and Lafayette “Lafe” Stahlman – and he will cover the interesting topic of organized crime's involvement in racing during the 1920s, especially Al Capone.

Plus, his look at the 1930s will concentrate on how automobile racing outgrew the fairground horse tracks and Midget Racing became a savior of the sport.

Anastor has been writing feature stories for AARN since 1978. And in addition to his work here, he was a sportswriter and columnist at The Vineland (NJ) Times Journal/The Daily Journal from 1970-1991, a contributing editor at Stock Car Racing and Open Wheel magazines for 20 years and he appeared on Ray Evernham's AmeriCarna TV show in April 2016 when it presented a half-hour segment on Board Track racing.

Bubb has been involved in all factions of racing, including pit crew, results writer, corner flagman, assistant starter and track announcer over the span of many decades. His column “Bubb's Bits” is a weekly feature in AARN and he is currently the head librarian at the Eastern Museum of Motor Racing in York Springs, PA.

The “Open Wheel Madness” Center Conversation begins at 1 p.m. and it is open to the public and free to attend.

Following the presentations, Anastor and Bubb will informally discuss their topics at a reception where light refreshments are served, or attendees may tour the Center, which will close at 5 p.m.