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## Remember When: Ed Fiola

Fiola did not get the media coverage of Herb Scott, Dick Linder, or Buddy O'Connor in the 50's and 60's. The local drivers knew they were in a highly competitive race when Fiola competed. His career began in 1949 with a team car of Hank Austin. Both Ed and Hank worked at Westinghouse Electric. They drove Ford Flatheads numbered 111 and 111Jr. at local tracks such as, Claridge, Turnpike, and Heidelberg Raceway. Hank's career was short but Ed went on to much bigger things in racing. Fiola's biggest year was 1952 when he drove Borandi's GMC powered number 270 to the Pennsylvania state championship in NASCAR. This was in the sportsman division and Fiola finished sixth in the nation. In 1954, when the Pittsburgh Racing Association was organized, he was one of the front-runners. Fiola teamed with his brother, Jim in their famous X numbered coupes. The team competed together from 1954 to 1960. Over the years, they switched from the GMC truck engine to the Buick V-8.

In 1958, the team campaigned a cut down 1937 Chevy sedan. It was so radical that the PRA officials made several trips to Fiola's garage in Turtle Creek to determine if the car was legal. When the coupes were replaced by the late models in 1961, the car was stored for many years in Jim Fiola's garage. Bud Kunkel purchased the car with plans to restore it but his health deteriorated and he eventually passed away before the project could be completed. The car is currently in the possession of Lynn Geisler.

The P.R.A. was a very successful organization some of the Pittsburgh Circle Track Club Hall of Fame that raced with Fiola includes many of the competitors from the P.R.A. The list is like a walk thru racing history. Dick Bailey, Norm Benning, Woody Brougher, Don Dahle, Nick Garin, Gus Linder, Dick Linder, Joe Mihalic, Glade Neil, Buddy O'Connor, John Orbin, Bob Schaefnocker, Herb Scott, Lee Stover, Dick Swartzlander, Bob Unks, Joe Viglione, Blackie Watt,

and Bill Webster Sr. Fiola was inducted in 1992. He was a hard charger but easy on the equipment. Ed is no longer with us but will always be remembered for his accomplishments in local racing.

The hard work and efforts of these racing pioneers will long be remembered by all of us in racing today. Many of the things that we take for granted now were not possible in the early years. The growing popularity of auto racing in the United States is a tribute to these men and other men like them across the country. They are the reason that auto racing is the number one spectator sport in this country today.

On August 12, 1959, a strike of the Pittsburgh Racing Association drivers at Heidelberg Raceway forced the closing of South Park Speedway and the operation of Heidelberg was in doubt. William Penn Speedway, also affiliated with the PRA but operated by veteran driver Buddy O'Connor, continued operating. Ed Witzberger, the president of the PRA, and the operator at South Park and Heidelberg said the drivers were demanding higher purses. This was the beginning of the end for the coupe division and in 1960 Witzberger switched to the super modifieds.