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## Remember When: Jim Magill

Jim Magill and his wife Peggy reside in Zelienople, Pa. Their two sons, Jimmy aged 38 and Michael, age 35 spent many years watching their Dad race. Magill was known for many years as "The Flying School Teacher". Monday through Friday Jim worked as a school teacher at the Pine-Richland School District but on the weekends he followed his passion driving racecars. His interest in racing began in the early 1960's when Jim and his father Blair bought an old GMC powered coupe from Dan Henshaw and began running in the "hardtop" class at the Butler Speedway and other area tracks. Magill became a front runner very quickly. In 1966, he sold the coupe and decided to go sprint car racing. The mild-mannered school teacher was probably not as happy in the sprint cars in spite of his three wins at Lernerville and one at Mercer. After a very bad flip one night at Mercer Magill elected to return to the full body cars and built a beautiful '34 Ford coupe powered by a small block Chevy. The team became big winners in the modified division during the 1970's. With that car he won a total of thirty-nine races at six different tracks. Twenty-eight of those wins came at Sportsman's Speedway where he was the top winner for a number of years. He scored wins at Butler, Lernerville, Mercer, North Hills, and the Meadville Fairgrounds. After retiring as a racecar driver and school teacher, Magill has stayed active in the sport as a pit steward at Lernerville and Tri-City Speedways. A few years ago Jim cut back to Friday only at Lernerville. He also enjoys bow hunting and camping.

Magill owned his own cars for most of his career. He got his start in racing at the age of fifteen helping his uncle Dan Henshaw who was running an old coupe at Mercer Raceway. Jim felt the best part of racing was that it was family oriented. He enjoyed the camaraderie. Winning was the best part and losing was the toughest. He said "most fans don't realize the work required to maintain a racecar". On many occasions, the team would work all night just to get the car ready for the next race. His most memorable moment in racing was winning a fifty lap modified

invitational at Mercer in 1975. It was very special because all of the heavy hitters were there and it wasn't Jim's home track. His most embarrassing moment in racing was in 1961, his first year of competition. He was leading the feature at Hickory lap after lap when one of the other drivers pulled up beside him in the corner on the last lap. Jim slowed down slightly going through turns three and four and Jim Irvine, Sr. passed him on the outside. This was very upsetting to Jim. His interest in racing first started after a trip to Indy with his father in 1946. Most people assume that Magill is too laid back to have been a competitive driver but he actually hates to lose and is very competitive. Some of his car owners during his career included his father, Blair Magill, Jim Douthett, Bob Magill, Paul Cetto, Bill Rowley, Tom Andrew, Blain Magill, and Vince Straub. His favorite competitors to race with were Bob Wearing Sr., Lou Blaney and Ralph Quarteron. Jim said "trying to run with these guys was like beating you head against the wall".

Tracks where he raced included Blanket Hill, Bradford, Butler, Clinton, Greater Pittsburgh, Hagerstown, Heidelberg, Jennerstown, Lernerville, Lincoln, Mansfield, Ohio, Meadville Fairgrounds, Mercer, Mon-Duke, Morgantown, North Hills, Port Royal, Schmuckers, Selinsgrove, Sharon, Skyline, Ohio, Sportsman's Speedway, Tri-City, and Williams Grove. His resume includes championships and special event wins at Sportsman and Tri City with many feature wins at the tracks listed above.

Jim and his father Blair were very close. His father's death from heart ailments in 1970 really affected him. His cousin Bob Magill built their last modified in 1972 while Bob was a senior in high school. The team went on to win thirty-five features with the car. The total investment for the racecar was \$800.00. When Magill retired he sold his car to then rookie Mike Sutton who destroyed it at Lernerville the following year. Race fans were lucky to watch this gentleman race and the competitors are fortunate to have him involved at the speedway. He is a class act and continues his teaching with his professional attitude while showing people how great our sport is.