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Reading Fairgrounds...Opening day 1966 by Walt Wimer

It was 1966. In February of that year I finished up a two year hitch of active duty with the Navel Reserve and elected to return to my native western Pennsylvania. With two Med Cruises in less than two years I didn't see a whole lot of racing in 1964-65. I had to rely on NSSN and AARN, which I had just found out about from Ken Wismer, Jr., who was on the same aircraft carrier. Getting back to western PA in the dead of winter I was chomping at the bit for some racing by the time March rolled around. Where to go?? Easy question, especially for a Modified lover.....READING!!! The Reading Fairgrounds was already "famous" and well known for their early openers for northeastern tracks. So off to Reading I went. Tommy McAndrews in the yellow & black #3A was the feature winner that day. I didn't get any photos of his car, but got a few others down by the pit gate as the cars rolled in. No time here to look up a lot of stats, but here are three of the cars that raced that rather cold day in early 1966.



TOP.....Lou Lazzaro out of Utica, NY wasn't a Reading regular, but he made the long tow down from the Empire State for the 66 opener. Known for some really battered #4 cars over the years, this Lazzaro #4 was cherry. I'll bet the '36 Chevy coupe had just been built over the winter and was making its maiden voyage on a race track. I could use up a page with statistics on the career of Lazzaro, but one quick one is that over a very long career he won 113 feature races at the Fonda Speedway in NY. This info from the book "FONDA" by Andy Fusco and Lew Boyd, both members of this "photo link" The "Monk"s first Fonda win came in 1961 and his last in 1999...just a couple of years short of a 40 year span!! Lazzarro is second to only Jack Johnson in Fonda victories.

MIDDLE.....The famed 6jr "MUSHROOM SPECIAL" owned by "Sock" Valeriano. The Valeriano cars were big winners at several tracks over the years including Nazerath & Reading. A lot of top

drivers raced the red & white Modifieds, but I think Ken Wismer probably won more with them than anyone else. Unfortunately I never marked these photos, so I am not sure who was behind the wheel this day at Reading. I think that by 1966 Wismer had hung up the helmet, from what I remember from Ken, Jr. during the nights we B.S'd racing while shipboard. I think maybe New Jersey driver Larry Voss might have been the driver at the time and I don't think the Valeriano cars raced too much longer than 1966 or 67. There are guys on here that will correct me if I am wrong!!!

BOTTOM!!!! This is the Joe Bullock #76 in the days before that long time car owner teamed up with one Gerald Chamberlain. At that time Chamberlain was still running Super-Modifieds at Hagerstown and elsewhere for the Don Rice Ford team out of Bedford, PA. In 1966 the driver of the Bullock #76 was Freddy Adam out of Kutztown, PA. Never one of the really big winners, Adam won more than his share and was a front runner during a long career. Adam ran the Bullock cars for several years and I think Bullock then went right to Chamberlain with the 3 window Chevy coupe and then the cut down Falcon Modified.