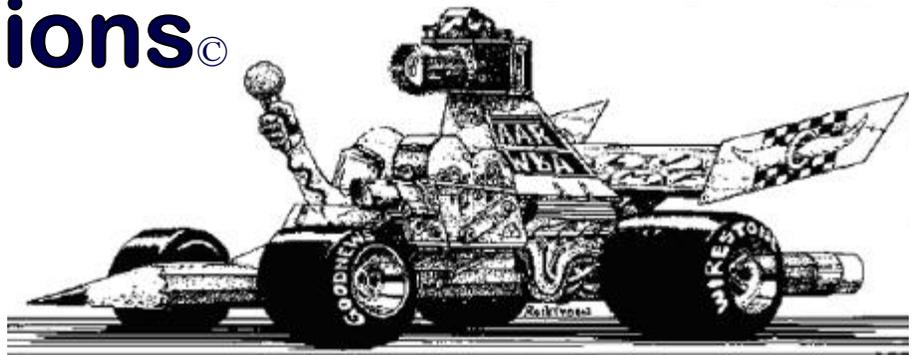


# ImpRESSIONs©



The Official Newsletter Of The American Auto Racing Writers and Broadcasters Association

Dec 2011

Vol. 44 No. 11



**new!**

## CALL FOR ENTRIES

### *AARWBA PUBLIC RELATIONS AWARDS\**

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NHRA Full Throttle Series - Top Fuel/Funny Car  
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**DEADLINE: JANUARY 20, 2012**

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*For Further Information:*

**John Chuhran**  
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(253) 220-2566  
racingPRcontest@gmail.com

or

**Steve Mayer**  
(310) 275-8423  
steven.n.mayer@gmail.com

# Jim Rathmann

## 1960 INDIANAPOLIS 500 WINNER

### Release and photos provided by Indianapolis Motor Speedway

Jim Rathmann, winner of both the 1960 Indianapolis 500 and the international 500-mile "Race of Two Worlds" in 1958 at Monza, Italy, died Wednesday, Nov. 23.

Rathmann passed away in a hospice in Melbourne, Fla., nine days after suffering a seizure at his home. He was 83.

Rathmann, who was inducted into the Auto Racing Hall of Fame in 1993 and the Motorsports Hall of Fame in 2007, already was a three-time runner-up in the "500" (1952, 1957 and 1959) when he scored his greatest victory. And if the 1960 race, with its record 29 lead changes, was not the finest "500" ever held, there can be no question that Rathmann's epic two-hour duel with defending winner Rodger Ward continues to stand out as the Speedway's greatest sustained two-man battle of all time.

For the entire second half of that never-to-be-forgotten classic, Rathmann and Ward were rarely any more than a few feet from each other, exchanging the lead 14 times between them. That number could have been considerably more had not tire wear played into the equation. Long before the days of computer-generated race strategies, two-way radio communication, spotters, and Pace Car-led pack-ups during caution periods, these two wily veterans pretty much had to figure it out for themselves, aided only by a pit board message flashed to them every minute or so.

Ward, an early leader, had stalled on his first of three planned stops, losing at least a half-minute. He raced hard to regain lost ground and caught up with Rathmann just before the halfway mark, fully cognizant that in the process he had placed undue stress on his tires. They swapped the lead several times before Ward decided to run behind Rathmann for a while and let him dictate the pace, both aware that third-placed Johnny Thomson was running a comfortable margin behind them. That was until the pit board signs began advising them that the advantage was shrinking. When it fell to only 10 seconds, they determined it was time to go.

The lead changed hands six more times in the final 30 laps until Ward happen to notice tell-tale discoloration appearing in the center of his right front tire, indicating that the cords were about to show through. He led as late as Lap 197 before reluctantly slowing down to salvage second as a greatly relieved Rathmann nursed his ailing tire to the finish and won at a record average speed of 138.767 mph.

Had Ward prevailed, Rathmann, who led exactly half of the 200 laps that day, would have held the dubious distinction of being history's only four-time runner-up at Indianapolis.

As an illustration of just how different things were in those days, the winning Ken-Paul Special was a brand new Offenhauser-powered car Rathmann had commissioned from his old friend A. J. Watson on behalf of Rathmann's partners, Kenny Rich and Paul Lacy. Rathmann and his chief mechanic, Chickie Hirashima, drove a station wagon out to Watson's shop in Glendale, Calif., to pick up the car whereupon they loaded it on to an open trailer and then towed it back to the Midwest themselves. More than rewarded by the eventual first-place prize money checks totaling a record \$110,000, Rathmann later estimated the entire investment at only \$35,000.

Born in Los Angeles on July 16, 1928, Rathmann started life as Royal Richard Rathmann, becoming "Jim" in the immediate post World War II years when he began racing hot rods as an under-

age teenager. He borrowed the identity of his two-and-half-year older brother, James, who later raced extensively and won the 1958 "500" pole position as "Dick" Rathmann. Although they were later to modify their dates of birth from time to time, they thankfully avoided further confusion by never professionally using their given names as they appeared on their driver's licenses and so forth, Richard Rathmann known for the remainder of his life as Jim, and James as Dick.

A contemporary, since his earliest racing days, of Troy Ruttman, Jack McGrath, Pat Flaherty, Don Freedland, Andy Linden and numerous other "500" stars of the future, Jim Rathmann moved to Chicago in 1948 to race hot rods with Andy Granatelli's Chicago-based Hurricane Hot Rod Association.

In 1949, Rathmann, Ruttman and Flaherty all made their Indianapolis debuts, Flaherty (who missed the show) being, at 23, the only one legally over 21. Rathmann, claiming to be 24, but really only 20, took his "rookie" test in a car he owned himself, but sponsored by Grancor Corporation, the hot rod business belonging to and operated by the Granatelli brothers. Rathmann ended up qualifying the Pioneer Auto Repair Special for John "The Popper" Lorenz and finishing 11th.

In 1952, driving for the Granatelli brothers, Rathmann finished second in the "500," beaten only by Troy Ruttman, his boyhood friend and fellow hotrod club member.

Rathmann, who was also runner-up to Sam Hanks in 1957 and to Ward in 1959, drove in a total of 14 Indianapolis 500 Mile Races between 1949 and 1963, leading at some stage during six of them for a total of 153 laps. At the time of his retirement in May 1964, he had completed 2,295 laps in competition and was within less than a full race of claiming the all-time record, only Cliff Bergere (2,452 laps) and Mauri Rose (2,420 laps) having completed a greater number.

Having travelled to Monza for the invitational 500-miler in 1957 merely as a potential relief driver since his regular car owner, Lindsey Hopkins had chosen not to send a car, Rathmann brokered a deal for the 1958 contest.

Underwritten by Bob Wilke of Leader Cards, sponsor of his recent fifth-place effort with Hopkins at Indianapolis, Rathmann leased a car from John Zink, retaining Zink's chief mechanic, Watson, another of Rathmann's hot rod cronies from the late 1940s. The 500-mile race at the steeply-banked and bone-jarring 2.64-mile concrete bowl was divided into three legs, with intervals between each. Rathmann won all three and was the undisputed overall winner at the incredible average speed of 166.722 mph.

That association led to Wilke forming the Leader Card Racing Team, with Watson leaving Zink to head up the operation and build new cars. At one point, Leader Card intended running a two-driver team, with Rathmann joining Ward. Then Hopkins made an arrangement to purchase the second brand-new "Watson" for Rathmann, Ward going on to win, with Rathmann recording his third runner-up finish.

By the time the 1959 "500" was held, Rathmann had further demonstrated his great skill and bravery by winning a 100-mile USAC National



## Rathmann



Championship race April 4 at the brand-new Daytona International Speedway. Far better suited to the NASCAR stock cars, which had ushered in the Daytona 500 in February with Lee Petty winning the caution-free inaugural at 135.521 mph, Rathmann ripped off the 100 miles in the astonishing time of only 35 minutes. Scrunched down in the cockpit of his fish-tailing front-engined Offenhauser-powered Watson "roadster" and wearing a short-sleeved polo shirt with only an open-faced Cromwell-type helmet for protection, he averaged a breathtaking 170.261 mph.

Three-times the Midwest hot rod champion (1948, 1950 and 1951) and third-ranking AAA stock car driver of 1955, the diversified Rathmann was one of the first oval track specialists to dabble in sports car racing, taking part in the Sebring 12 Hours three times (sharing the 12th place-finishing and class-winning Corvette with Dick Doane in 1958) and racing several times at Nassau. He was even down to drive the Tec-Mec Maserati at the inaugural Formula One Grand Prix of the United States at Sebring in 1959 although he ended up not competing. He twice ran in the Carrera Panamericana, sharing an Oldsmobile in 1952 with Frank "Rebel" Mundy, and he even took part in the Miami-Nassau powerboat race one year, sustaining a broken foot along the way while trying to fix a mechanical problem.

An entrepreneur from his earliest days, Rathmann graduated from a paper route to running a hot rod shop while still in his teens. A muffler shop in Chicago was followed by a speed shop in Miami, a used car business and eventually a huge Cadillac and Chevrolet dealership in Melbourne, Fla., the latter being contingent upon his retirement, an agreement upon which he "fudged" for at least two more years.

There was also a very successful go-kart business which produced the highly sought-after Rathmann Xterminator and even an adventuresome episode of his life in which he held the rights to retrieving centuries-old treasure chests, firearms and cannons from sunken pirate ships off the coast of Florida.

Close friends with all of the early astronauts, Rathmann actually pulled off a most unlikely coup by having one of them discreetly affix a Rathmann car dealership decal to the famous golf cart which was driven on the surface of the moon! Yet another venture was the G.C.R. Corporation team which contested the USAC championship series in 1966 and 1967, the "G" being for Gus Grissom, the "C" for Gordon Cooper and "R" for Rathmann.

One of the fascinating character traits of Rathmann was that he always seemed so nonchalant in the winner's circle, even at Indianapolis and Monza where he'd be poker-faced and stoic, standing up in the cockpit with loosened helmet straps dangling around his neck and barely smiling as he waved one hand at just above waist level.

It was a misleading illusion.

In fact, this very down-to-earth and unpretentious individual happened to be a fun-loving, chronic practical joker who seemed up for just about any mischievous adventure. A very modest man, he was most gracious to the fans, benched-raced with the best of them and told stories laced with a most infectious giggle. Questions about his own career were usually passed off with brief and rather evasive responses as he preferred instead to tell stories about his colleagues, tears of mirth rolling his cheeks as he relayed the details of yet another prank.

But Rathmann was a serious racer, and he loved the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. To him, the month of May at the track was "everything," the other 11 months always being filled with plenty of activities, but with the focus clearly on the next migration to IMS. In spite of his deep competitive spirit, he was a great sportsman who was close with many of his contemporaries, photographs taken in the aftermath of the 1957 and 1959 Indianapolis races indicating that he obviously had great affection for both Hanks and Ward, who had narrowly defeated him.



Ill health in recent years had prevented Rathmann from making his annual pilgrimage to his beloved Speedway where, for many years he had matched his golfing skills with Ward, Lloyd Ruby, Parnelli Jones, James Garner and others. Six times the Pace Car driver for the "500," Rathmann's final appearance in the city of Indianapolis came at the Convention Center in February 2009 for the Speedway's Centennial Era Gala, where he was the oldest and earliest of the 19 Indianapolis 500 winners on hand.

Rathmann is survived by wife Kay, sons Jimmy and Jay, stepsons Zack and Tosh Pence, five grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

In place of flowers the family requests that donations be made to:  
William Childs Hospice House  
381 Medplex Parkway  
Palm Bay, FL 32907

## The BRHG Remembers Frank Dominianni

*Written by Peter Klebnikov to Joe Dominianni,  
son of Frank Dominianni, on behalf of the  
Bridgehampton Racing Heritage Group  
(BRHG)*

Dear Joe -

The Bridgehampton Racing Heritage Group is deeply saddened to hear of the passing of your father, Frank Dominianni this week. Frank was an example to all of us younger racers – not only was he a fierce competitor but he was something much rarer, a true gentleman on and off the track, and a generous soul. I am too young to have attended the lavish feasts he prepared for crew and friends at his speed shop, one of the last old time speed shops in the state. But I know from personal experience how he instantly made everyone feel like family.



*Two sports car racing legends, Herb Wetanson  
and Frank Dominianni (l-r) at the 2011  
Bridgehampton Days event in October  
Photo by Peter Klebnikov*

And of course, Frank's name was indelibly linked to the great Bridgehampton Race Circuit. He was there at the first race in 1957, terrorizing the track, and he was there at the last event in the summer of 1997, along with his legendary #69.

To think, only last month we saw him at our Bridgehampton event, nattily dressed as usual, hugging everyone, watching the 1958 movie and saying with his quiet, pleased smile: "That's me in the red car."

No need to tell you, the red car was passing everyone in sight.

Please know that you are not alone in your grief for the passing of a special man. We will miss him.

R.I.P. Frank

*Peter Klebnikov, Guy Frost, and the  
Bridgehampton Racing Heritage Group*

## Jimmy Bryan DVD

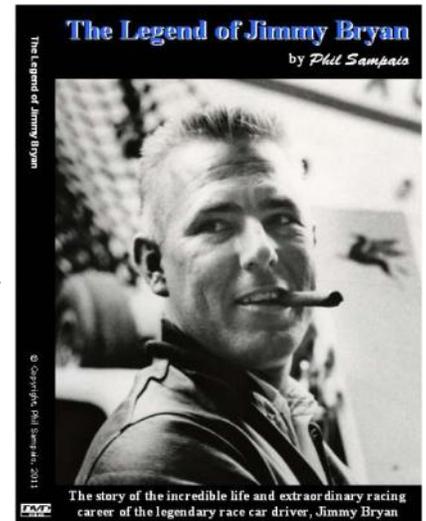
*Phil Sampaio, Co-author of  
"My Hero, My Friend Jimmy Bryan"*

### **Fellow AARWBA members:**

I wanted to share with members the news that we have just finished working on a new DVD about the life and racing career of Jimmy Bryan, called "The Legend of Jimmy Bryan."

The DVD, which is available exclusively from our website, [www.jimmybryanbook.com](http://www.jimmybryanbook.com), is a fresh look into the life of the most famous American race car driver from the 1950s and contains recently discovered footage and images that have never been seen by the public.

This past May, to coincide with the 100th Anniversary of the Indy 500, our book, "My Hero, My Friend Jimmy Bryan," was re-released. In July, I was asked by the Arizona State Fair to make a presentation at the Arizona Fairgrounds on the life of Jimmy Bryan to coincide with the Arizona Centennial celebration. As a result of that request, I began working on a film project about Jimmy Bryan that would piece together rare photographs and images that were not used in our book when it initially came out in 1992. The DVD is the final outcome of all of that. In the process, we were able to find some extremely rare racing footage of Jimmy at the Arizona Fairgrounds, some home movies, and two Mobil gas commercials that have not been seen by the public in more than 50 years! Needless to say I am very thrilled with the outcome and am hopeful that fellow AARWBA members will enjoy our DVD. I was helped by a number of key people, including personnel from The Arizona State Fair and fans of Jimmy Bryan and our book, who supplied us with some of the photographic images used in the DVD. Doake Wing, of Rare Sportsfilms, Inc., ([www.raresportsfilms.com](http://www.raresportsfilms.com)), was extremely helpful in providing footage of Jimmy Bryan at Indianapolis. We were even able to find footage of what has been confirmed as Jimmy Bryan's final television interview. All of this is on the new DVD and we are happy to bring it to you now and very timely as Jimmy Bryan is about to be inducted into the National Midget Racing Hall of Fame this coming January.



It was a honor for me to be asked to partake in the Centennial celebration at The Arizona State Fair this year and to speak about Jimmy Bryan beneath the shadow of the original grandstands where he once raced and thrilled crowds. It was certainly fitting since Jimmy Bryan was such a key figure from our state and really put Arizona on the map because of his tremendous popularity with race fans. I have been humbled and thrilled with the continued outpouring of support for our book about Jimmy, and I think this DVD is extension of that love. Jimmy Bryan is still such a notable race car driver and that is why we decided to focus solely on the man behind the wheel and his extraordinary racing career. His stature in racing history endures because of who he was and the kind of driver he was, and we hope that this DVD will shine a spotlight on his legacy. Please look for the DVD on the Jimmy Bryan book website and join us on our Facebook page, which you can find under the title of our book.

Thanks to AARWBA members for your support!

# Remembering Frank Dominianni

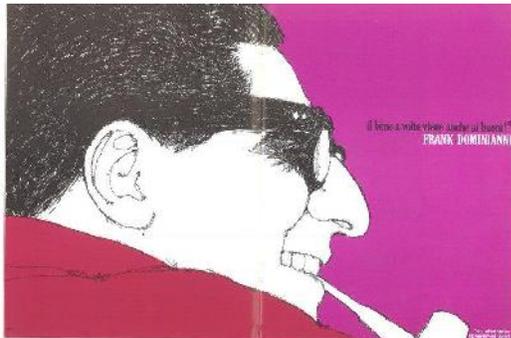
*Pioneer Racer, SCCA B Production National Champion, 1964  
August 1, 1925 - November 9, 2011*

*Written by Jan Hyde, <http://registryofcorvetteracecars.com/>*

In 1963, Carroll Shelby's new 289 cu in Ford Cobras virtually ended the hopes of the heavier 327 cu in Corvettes in SCCA's A Production class. So in 1964, Frank Dominianni installed a 283 cu in engine and took the B Production championship that year in his 1962/61 Corvette. En route Frank won at the Memorial Day Bridgehampton nationals, at Mid-Ohio, at the Watkins Glen 500 with Bob Grossman sharing the drive and at Thompson, Ct. He finished 2nd to Don Yenko at the Road America June Sprints and at Virginia International Raceway. Frank's season earned a 4 page profile in Corvette News, Vol 8 no 3 and write-ups in other publications including the New York Times and Autoweek and Competition Press

In a larger sense, Frank will be remembered for his interest and curiosity in just about everything, a smile for everyone and the way he raced, seemingly on the "edge of destruction". Frank's shop in Valley Stream, NY was one of the very first on Long Island to boast an engine and chassis dyno. He put it to good use over many years for himself and his customers. When Ramjet Fuel Injection debuted in 1957, Frank immersed himself for 2 days to master all the tricks, becoming a leading fuelie specialist.

Frank's many interests and engaging way resulted in countless friendships in and out of racing. And his fearless driving remains the stuff of legend. The daunting Bridgehampton race circuit on eastern Long Island separated the men from the boys. From the long pit straight, "big bore" cars approached turn 1 at 150 mph downhill under the bridge while committing to turn 2, a blind drop-off. There are still fans that marvel at Frank's style, muscling his solid axle Corvette "sideways" through that section with never a sign of brake lights. Few others could conquer the "Terror of the Bridge" like Frank.



Returning from WWII earning a Bronze Star and a Presidential Citation in George Patton's unit, Frank was attracted by hot rodding and started Hi Speed Power Equipment, Inc. When the racing bug bit Frank, he went out and qualified for the 94th license issued by the SCCA. He began with a Crossle Hotshot, moved on to MGs, an Allard and other modified and formula cars running on airport and the early public road courses at Bridgehampton and Watkins Glen. The 1957 Corvette was a game changer, the first of 3 he prepared and raced, each red and bearing his signature number 69.

On reflection, Frank was the classic overachiever compared to his better known rivals Don Yenko and Dick Thompson who were backed by Grady Davis, a top executive at Gulf Oil in Pittsburgh. Frank prevailed for his part with a combination of resourcefulness, a keen understand-

ing of engineering, optimism and a never quit attitude.

Frank was a fixture for years, retiring old #69 behind his shop after winning the support race preceding the inaugural Can-Am at Bridgehampton in September, 1966. Good fortune put Frank back behind the wheel of that car at the 1987 Monterey Historics and other vintage races after he sold it in 1970. Frank's Corvette now resides in the museum collection of a well-known Corvette figure.

Thursday morning November 9 dawned like any other day. Frank arrived at his shop in his recently acquired 2010 Grand Sport Corvette. Red of course, special plates FJD-69. That evening he drove out to visit with his wife who is confined at a nursing home. While there he collapsed and could not be revived. Frank Dominianni was 86.

Friends and family plan a gathering early next year to celebrate the life and times of a good friend who inspired all who knew him in so many ways.

A Video tribute can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8i1c0qCF8DI>

AARWBA will present a new award at the 2012 banquet,  
**"The Dan Wheldon Award"**

It will be presented to the driver who is the "Best Ambassador" for racing - specifically in the area of attracting younger fans (via Facebook, Twitter, Google, etc.)

American Auto Racing Writers & Broadcasters Association, Inc. ([www.aarwba.org](http://www.aarwba.org))  
"Dedicated To Increasing Media Coverage Of Motor Sports"

# "A Call to Arms: Press Leadership in the Future of Motorsports"

by William F. Vartorella

Ernest Hemingway is reported to have once quipped, "There are only three sports: mountain climbing, bull fighting, and auto racing. Rest are games." Well, mountain climbing now costs the price of a small sports car and bull fighting is increasingly limited to Lambo's penchant for naming supercars after famous four-legged athletes in the ring.

That leaves motorsports and those camp-followers who try to match the dice on the tracks with some well-chosen wordsmithing.

Question is where all of this is headed in an economy in which some estimates place one-third of every grid starved for cash and, therefore, less than competitive. "The Circus," to borrow from F1 iconography, seems to encompass smaller and smaller rings and the show, well, if you include major sanctions worldwide outside the dirt tracks and rallies, less than stellar.

"Dancing with the devil" is no longer the razor-edge and negotiating multiple-apex corners. The devil is in the details of sponsorship and negotiations are far from the diminishing crowds at trackside, in the board rooms dominated by suits, charm school tutors, and nervous-nellie sponsors.

Perhaps the problem can best be summarized by "RACES"--"R" is for racetrack, etc.--

\* Racetracks now number, say, 475 in the U.S., with the potential for "endangered species" status ever present.

\* Aficionados/fans = 100 million in the U.S., with changing geodemographics that bewilder automakers and media as niches become smaller and audiences, more fragmented.

\* Cars (race cars) have fewer and fewer design cues that let the rabid fan know what's a Chevy or, worse, any idea of how a brand's DNA translates into a racing breed or in the showroom on Monday.

\* Environment/green racing is the emerging battleground on the track, as the real technological excitement, re: "Peak Oil (?)," is racing hybrids and their edgy appeal to the younger, next-generation of racing enthusiast.

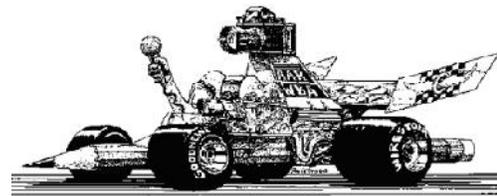
\* Sponsors are on financial "fumes," as true racers are starting to get the picture that there are only roughly 500 serious sponsors worldwide and the competition for them is keen in the over-saturated, aging motorsports sanctions.

With this said, the days of interviewing Bubba, post-"hat dance" of sponsors and endless recitals of who-paid-for-what and "we wuz bangin' bumpers" are over, or on the verge of it. What the motorsports press seems to overlook is the symbiotic relationship between press and privateer. The same tired questions and answers keep the sport "steeped in tradition," which really means mired in the past. We and automotive manufacturers reminisce about the good old days when "win on Sunday, sell on Monday" resonated. And that's the point here. For motorsports to rebound in the "steeped in tradition" heritage, it's going to take a fresh approach from the four-legged stool of car-makers, teams, sponsors, and press. Let's buckle up and

look at some emerging trends that need to get covered up-close and in-depth:

1. A return to the "win on Sunday, sell on Monday" with a twist. "Carbon neutral" racing is here, competitive, and plays to differences and design cues that translate into Next Gen race fans and traffic in the showrooms.

2. Interactive cockpits and the fan experience: racing has forgotten that motorsports is the only sport where the fan can strap in, either via a small camera embedded on the racer/cockpit or virtually. It's not like being at the racetrack, but if the experience gets "real" again, the potential for fans in the stands is there.



3. Sponsorship coverage isn't about high-speed, rolling billboards, the "hat dance," or talking animals. It's about building relationships through experiences and connecting fans to race teams via strong sponsorship "activation." Remember: it takes eight (8) times the effort to attract a new sponsor as to keep an old one and the "profit" is in renewals. Teams and journalists need to look at the supply chain used by sponsors as a new(er) source of cash, in-kind, and technology stories. "Liveries", like marketing plans, are increasingly short-term, and everyone knows that increased coverage tends to hold sponsors to the teams like glue.

4. Race day needs to be the launch pad for much more than just endless driver and war wagon interviews. Technology and the education of fans on the nuances of next generation race cars is part of the equation that pulls manufacturers, teams, sponsors, fans together.

5. Fan-friendly, public workshops on motorsports: put a fan in a simulator or in a room with drivers and engineers with a cutaway racecar and you connect the dots more easily to the sponsor and the car marker. Roughly half of U.S. fans are women and, as automakers know, they are the primary decision-makers for car purchases.

6. New media/social media as an anchor sponsor for a race team: when a team is literally "guaranteed" coverage online or via some multiple platform that includes traditional media and emerging technologies in a "disruptive" way, sponsors follow.

7. Finally, as an aside, sanctioning bodies need to provide liberal rules that encourage emerging technologies to "run what you bring." Admittedly, electrics pose their own issues with batteries/impact safety and have about a 20-lap (maybe) stint, plus a time-consuming pit stop. One interim approach is short races/"heat" with some new definition of what comprises a race meeting and the main event.

To paraphrase the late Steve McQueen, racing is life. What the fans, manufacturers, sponsors, track promoters, and race teams are waiting for is the motorsports press to step up and help re-define racing in the 21st century. Otherwise, Hemingway may be proved wrong.