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Remember When: Andy Lutz

Andy Lutz started his racing career after a stint in the Army. His first car was a 1950 Oldsmobile. He then replaced the Olds with a 1950 Chevy because the car was a lighter weight. The rules specified that the engine had to be the same make and model as the car so Andy welded an Oldsmobile dashboard in the Chevy. When the track officials at the Sharon Speedway discovered the modifications, they threw him out. In 1965, Andy built a '64 Chevelle convertible to compete at the local speedways. The car was only one year old. I didn't want to ask Andy where it came from or how much it cost.

Andy soon decided that he wanted to compete in the Coupe Division locally. His first coupe was purchased from Mike Morenchick. It was a 1937 Chevy powered by an Oldsmobile engine. Shortly after buying the car, he teamed up with Billy Vance and started using the familiar yellow and red #86 on their race cars. Lutz drove for Vance for five or six years after switching to Pontiac engines. Andy is best remembered with the yellow Ford coach which he campaigned at the local speedways. Former flagman, Freddie Rush told Andy about a Tobias car that Ron Schmucker had for sale. Schmucker actually had two cars and sold one of them to Andy.

In 1973, Andy was the co-champion of Walt Wimer's Cavalcade Awards. Lutz and Blackie Watt were tied in the point standings. Andy still is waiting for his clock which was the award given to the winner each year. Lutz had a similar problem in 1972 when he won the track championship at Tri City Speedway and the promoter ran off at the end of the year without presenting any of the trophies. Several years ago Andy gave Walt Wimer a special beer can trophy with half of a donkey attached to the top. (You can only imagine which half of the donkey) Lutz thought it was funny and did not find out until last Friday in an interview with Wimer on Trackside that the can was worth fifty dollars.

It was never hard to find Andy at the speedway; he was usually wearing a funny hat, chewing on a cigar, and smiling. Wimer gave Lutz the nickname "The Clown Prince of Local Racing". Andy would always let the kids come down in the pit area and sit in his car or have their picture taken. Today he spends most of his time traveling to Lernerville and Mercer to watch his son Mike compete in the Sprint Car Division.

Andy has been a winner in the Claimers, Coupes, Six Cylinder Modifieds, and Sprint Car Divisions. He obtained one of his first modified rides when car owner Paul Rathy rolled his car losing his teeth in the process, and swallowed a mouthful of tobacco. Paul decided it would be much better if Andy drove instead.

During the years that I competed at Mercer Raceway, I observed Andy in victory lane on a regular basis with wins in his modified as well as a six cylinder #61 of Dick Schuller. The Schuller/Lutz team won a total of forty nine features.

During his sixty years in racing Andy said the best part was winning and the toughest part was getting torn up. His most memorable moment in racing was winning the 1973 Shaeffer Qualifier at Lernerville Speedway. He also has fond memories of his wife Billie helping him to maintain the car, build the engines, and tow it to the tracks. Billie was awarded a trophy for mechanic of the year at Mercer Raceway. His most embarrassing moment in racing was the night he broke off the steering wheel at Mercer while leading the race.

He got involved in racing through his brothers and they should be very proud of his accomplishments. In 1973 he was the track champion at Sportsman Speedway; other titles included Tri City (1972) Blanket Hill and North Hills (1973) plus Mercer and Hickory in 1979.

Andy feels that his proudest moment in racing is having his son Mike follow in his footsteps and develop into an excellent racecar driver. His favorite competitor to race against was Ed Lynch, Sr.

Tracks where he competed include: Blanket Hill, Buckeye, Butler, Canfield, Challenger, Clearfield, Hickory, Hummingbird, Jennerstown, Latrobe, Lernerville, Meadville Fairgrounds,

Mansfield, Ohio, Mercer, Motordrome, North Hills, Pennsboro, Pittsburgh, Raceway 7, Schmucker's, Sharon, Sportsman's Speedway, Tri-City, and Wayne County.

Some other big names in the Modifieds during the period while Andy was winning at Mercer included Vic George, Tom Marshall, Paul Brown, Yip Robinson, and Russ Woolsey. Records for 1964-65 apparently have been lost in time, but from 1966 through 2000, four drivers stand at the head of the list in the 6 Cylinder Modifieds Tommy Kristyak, Kenny Hardy, Lou Gentile and Andy Lutz. Some of Andy's car owners included Bill Vance, Lloyd Latch, Dick Schuller, Arlie Utsinger, and Paul Rathy. His pit crew included, Larry Riffe, Bill Vance, and his son Mike.

Andy's hobbies include restoring old cars, going racing and spoiling his grandkids. Lutz is currently restoring a 1940 Cadillac with a 340 cubic inch flat head engine. Andy brought a great deal of enjoyment to his many fans and is one of the reasons that we can look back and "Remember When".

Reminder: Friday at Lernerville Speedway it is Fab Four Racing, ARCH Fan Club Night and Nostalgia Night. The list of the invited guests includes Bob Axe, Johnny Axe, Dick Bailey, Banker Beach, John Beaber, Buddy Cochran, Harley Chuba, John Flinner Sr., Fran Gower, Harry Hein, Doc Harmon, Dave Hoffman, George Leon, Gus Linder, Don Luffy, Andy Lutz, Ed Lynch Sr., Jim Magill, Hoot Martin, Jerry Matus, Clayton Majors, Dave Meloy, Brian Muehlman, Mark Muehlman, Dunk Packdozi, Dave Pegher, Don Pegher, Barry Peters, Ralph Quarterson, Terry Rosenberger, Dave Rupp, Deek Scott, Herb Scott, Smokey Schempp, Gus Sholich, Jack Sodeman, Bob Stanford, Dick Swartzlander, Blackie Watt, Bob Wearing Sr., Bill Wheeling.

Paul Backus will have the Deek Scott Modified #7A on display along with Mike Cotter's Bob Kennedy's Late Model #9, and Darwin Stivenson will display his 1936 Chevy Coupe. Driver autographs will be available from 6-7 PM in the area behind the main grandstands.