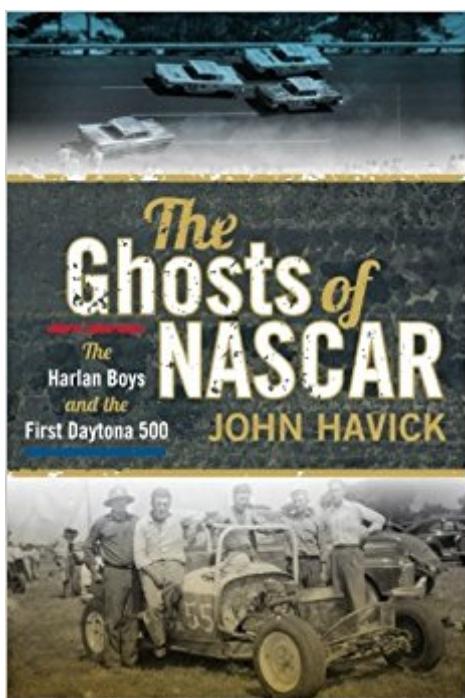


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The Ghosts Of NASCAR: The Harlan Boys And The First Daytona 500



Synopsis

Who won the first Daytona 500? Fans still debate whether it was midwestern champion Johnny Beauchamp, declared the victor at the finish line, or longtime NASCAR driver Lee Petty, declared the official winner a few days after the race. The Ghosts of NASCAR puts the controversial finish under a microscope. Author John Havick interviewed scores of people, analyzed film of the race, and pored over newspaper accounts of the event. He uses this information and his deep knowledge of the sport as it worked then to determine what probably happened. But he also tells a much bigger story: the story of how Johnny Beauchamp— and his Harlan, Iowa, compatriots, mechanic Dale Swanson and driver Tiny Lund— ended up in Florida driving in the 1959 Daytona race. The Ghosts of NASCAR details how the Harlan Boys turned to racing cars to have fun and to escape the limited opportunities for poor boys in rural southwestern Iowa. As auto racing became more popular and better organized in the 1950s, Swanson, Lund, and Beauchamp battled dozens of rivals and came to dominate the sport in the Midwest. By the later part of the decade, the three men were ready to take on the competition in the South’s growing NASCAR circuit. One of the top mechanics of the day, Swanson literally wrote the book on race cars at Chevrolet’s clandestine racing shop in Atlanta, Georgia, while Beauchamp and Lund proved themselves worthy competitors. It all came to a head on the brand-new Daytona track in 1959. The Harlan Boys’ long careers and midwestern racing in general have largely faded from memory. The Ghosts of NASCAR recaptures it all: how they negotiated the corners on dirt tracks and passed or spun out their opponents; how officials tore down cars after races to make sure they conformed to track rules; the mix of violence and camaraderie among fierce competitors; and the struggles to organize and regulate the sport. One of very few accounts of 1950s midwestern stock car racing, The Ghosts of NASCAR is told by a man who was there during the sport’s earliest days.

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Customer Reviews

Journal of American Culture, "John Havick takes readers on a rollicking ride back to the roots of stock car racing in the Midwest.... [his] engaging and well-written book will appeal to both racing fans and to students of popular culture, for he skillfully situates the origins of contemporary stock racing within the social and economic culture of postwar America." The Ghosts of NASCAR: The Harlan Boys And The First Daytona 500 (University of Iowa Press), judged by American Auto Racing and Broadcasters Inc. the second best motorsport book of 2013. "Dale Swanson was a top race mechanic, careful and creative. Tiny Lund was a good, ferocious competitor, particularly on dirt tracks, and Johnny Beauchamp in fewer than thirty races proved he could race and win against the top NASCAR drivers. This book describes how these three learned to compete on midwestern tracks. . . . It is a story not to be missed." • Rex White, 1960 NASCAR Grand National Champion "A detailed account of stock car racing's overlooked pre-TV days, a simpler era when a big-hearted, lead-footed, small-town midwestern boy could reach NASCAR's top tiers. This is more than an investigation of the controversial first Daytona 500. It's the story of the sport's coming of age." • Neal Thompson, author, Driving with the Devil: Southern Moonshine, Detroit Wheels, and the Birth of NASCAR "John Havick has written an important, informative account of the early days of racing in the Midwest. He focuses on the life and times of Iowan Johnny Beauchamp, the Ghost of Playland Park, the declared victor of the very first Daytona 500 until NASCAR czar Bill France and racing legend Lee Petty conspired to cheat him out of his victory. The Ghosts of NASCAR is a winner." • Peter Golenbock, author, American Zoom, Last Lap, and NASCAR Confidential

When John Havick's grandfather sold his car to local boy and aspiring racecar driver Johnny Beauchamp, the young Havick went to see how the car performed. Falling in love with the sport, he kept scrapbooks of newspaper articles and programs tracking the triumphs and defeats of Beauchamp, Tiny Lund, and many other successful racers from the town of Harlan, Iowa. Then he went away to high school and college, leaving his childhood hobby behind but never forgetting it. After a career teaching public policy at the Georgia Institute of Technology, he revived his interest in

the sport and decided to tackle one of its longtime controversies: who really won the inaugural Daytona 500 in 1959? The result of years of research and scores of interviews, this book tells the whole story. John Havick lives in Stone Mountain, Georgia.

This is a very informative book. Mr Havick obviously did extensive research and did a commendable job of compiling it. The information he presents, however, leaves this reader pondering many questions that are never answered. Maybe the answers just aren't there any more since so much time has passed, and, as he states in the final chapter, much of the truth about the early days of racing has been pushed aside by legend. It seems clear that, like so many other larger than life racers and car builders from the early stock car days, Beauchamp, Swanson, and Lund were treated as outsiders by the NASCAR hierarchy. Big Bill France may have been considered a benevolent dictator by some, but to many others, he was just a dictator.

It has articles on the upcoming Nascar stars of yesterday. The old racers of yesterday. Well written and the author did his research. I would recommend this for anyone interested in auto racing. You have always heard of one make the statement, a book is hard to put down once you start reading it. Well, this is such a book. Open it up and fasten your seat belt. You are in for some good old time midwest racing with drivers you can relate to and remember seeing race on the dirt short tracks of the midwest.

Great reading and no doubt true. Excellent job of writing about those little known facts in the early days before NASCAR became the giant it is today. IMCA racing was in its prime and boy was it fun reading about Playland Park in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Both Tiny and Johnny got their start at the Shelby County Fairgrounds and at Playland Park. Outstanding book and well written. I grew up in Harlan, Iowa and recall delivering newspapers to Tiny Lund's Mothers beauty shop and went to school with Billy and Bobby Beauchamp. If you like racing and history then this book is a bargain

I just happened to hear of this book from a local media source. I got on and was very pleased it was available. As an "old" NASCAR fan I found this book very interesting. I personally knew some of the drivers that are written about. Those were the "Good Old Days" of NASCAR before all the big money arrived. Guys working in a small garage in a small Iowa town could actually compete at the highest level. And...YES...I still believe Johnny Beauchamp won the initial Daytona 500!

Love this book. Very good read about my Uncle. Recommend to add to your collection. If your a NASCAR fan and want to know part of it's history, this book is for you.

Having grown up in Harlan, I was knew of these three guys especially Tiny as my dad was a high school friend of his. I wasn't aware of the partnership between Dale and Johnny nor the untold accomplishments they racked up. Great reading, very entertaining and hard to put down.

A good look at the world of NASCAR from somewhere other than the south. A well written book loaded with information about the early years of racing and drivers from the Midwest.

My dad doesn't just sit and read-but when I got him this for Christmas, he immediately sat down and started to read it. You can't go wrong with it-being from Iowa, this tells the story of the Harlan boys-from Harlan-Iowa, which intrigued my dad even more.

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