

Inside the Vault

Family Histories @ the 'bowl

BY SID DIMAGGIO

Back for another edition, out on the branches of the Speedbowl family tree. This edition has a connection through Speedbowl history that you can't easily trace like you would with some of the more obvious (like the Gada, Thomas, Pearl or Ceravolo racing clans) where you can remember a last name and see all the relatives. This one I've come to learn about over the years on my strolls through the pits talking with the racers each week that you might not yet be familiar with.

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William's brother Rick would become a fixture at the Speedbowl, especially in Grand American Late Model days of the 1970's, when he drove his familiar #16 to 5 feature wins while also a fan-favorite known as Rick "Sleepy" Knapp. The #16 machine to the right is one of my favorites from the many slick looking rides Rick used to field at the 'bowl.



Rene Dugas photo - Hovey Collection

Rick raced into the 1990's, eventually moving to the SK Modifieds®. When he was given the chance to drive Fred Beaber's #7 in 1993, he gave his young nephew Walt a chance to drive his #16 SK Modified machine. Although Rick returned to pilot the car in 1995, he would retire soon afterwards. Rick then dedicated his time to helping Walt, who was now competing in the Strictly Stock division.



Rene Dugas photo - Hovey Collection

The family operation returned to Victory Lane on May 19, 2001 when Walt scored his first career win and Rick was right there to congratulate him (left). Walt scored victories in 3 straight seasons and the team won the 2002 Pit Crew of the Year award. In September of 2005 however, Rick passed away when he was 53 years old. Walt now has 14 Street Stock wins and counting, and he still has his great-uncle's old #16 SK Modified. Every year he brings it to the Speedbowl to compete in the Finale. As many times as I've seen him bring that mod to the 'bowl, I don't ever remember it

being too competitive. But after talking with Walt over the years, it's obvious that bringing that family machine back to the Speedbowl each year isn't about being competitive. Indeed, we all can get wrapped up in this sport, and the goal is always to win the race, but seeing that #16 SK Modified every October, I'm reminded that winning really isn't everything... and family can mean so much more!

Walt's family tree reminds me of one of the earliest days of Sid's Vault. It was early in the 2006 season when I had just finished posting my Speedbowl statistical research online and I saw Walt late one Saturday as the night's events were wrapping up. He said "Hey, your site is pretty cool. People always ask me if my uncle ever won at the Speedbowl, and now there's a place that shows that he did." "Who's your uncle?" I said, not remembering any other Hovey from my research. "Rick Knapp"... and with his answer, I learned that statistics definitely don't tell ya everything. Like these two examples here, sometimes ya just have to look a lil' deeper.