

For More Information Contact:
Marsha Newsom
Marketing/Public Relations
Motorsports Racing Legacies
PMB 144, 3240 Lone Oak Road
Paducah, KY 42003

Contact Information
Phone:270-994-4276
marsha@motorsportsracinglegacies.com
www.motorsportsracinglegacies.com

Ghost Tracks Revisits the Asphalt Playgrounds of Bygone Eras

Ghost Tracks, a then-and-now look at the history of some of sports car racing's greatest tracks, is Pete Hylton's testament to the enduring impact these sites have had on the progression of the sport.

“The progression from street circuits, to airport circuits, to early permanent facilities, to the current generation of tracks has been amazing,” Hylton said. “It is part of what has shaped our sport.”

In *Ghost Tracks*, Hylton describes the tracks as “the asphalt playgrounds of race car drivers, echoing with the roar of engines and the squeal of skinny bias-ply tires. The paddocks were filled with gentleman racers tinkering on Ferraris, OSCAs, bathtub Porsches and Coopers. Now, they sit silent and the engines scream only in memories.”

Hylton has first-hand knowledge of the subject. In the 1980's, he raced Mid-America Raceway, one of the tracks profiled in the book. He joined the Sports Car Club of America (www.scca.com) as a high school student in 1973 and competed for 25 years. He served on the SCCA board of directors for nine years, and holds the honor of being the youngest-ever elected member of that body.

After retiring from his position on the board, he volunteered to become historian and archivist for the world's largest active motorsports membership organization. Hylton also became a contributing writer for "SportsCar," the SCCA's official magazine. *Ghost Tracks* is based on the series of the same name that he published between 2001 and 2007. This is his second book on the history of the organization.

Ghost Tracks takes readers back to such great permanent tracks as Mid-America Raceway, Meadowdale, Marlboro and Brooklands, along with airstrips, parks, stadiums and roadways across the country where drivers competed in the early years of club racing history. In many cases, all that remains is an overgrowth of trees, shrubs and weeds while other sites have been replaced by shopping malls and housing development. In many cases, Pete found traces of the original course... and perhaps the spirit of long-gone drivers.

“At one point my 6-year-old daughter became convinced that she could hear a race car coming and that we needed to get off the pavement. Perhaps she did hear the ghosts of SCCA races 30 years ago. When I tried, I almost could too.”

At the end of his quest, Hylton concluded that there was very little difference between the tracks of the bygone eras and today. Time and technology may have progressed. But there is actually a great deal of similarity between the old and new tracks — both were constructed to give racers a fun and challenging place to go play with their toys. Ultimately, that is what SCCA is about. "We are people who love cars, and love driving them fast," Hylton says. "For well over 50 years we've been looking for fun places to do that. So not surprisingly, there are a lot of similarities between the historical tracks and today's circuits.”

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