



# Meadowdale International Raceways Preservation Association Newsletter

April 2011 Volume 2, Issue 1

[www.mirpa.org](http://www.mirpa.org)

## Winter Banquet: Bobby & Mike Rahal



Racing legend and 1986 Indy 500 winner, Bobby Rahal and his Father, Mike Rahal joined us for the 2nd Annual MIRPA Winter Banquet that was held on February 5th at the Randall Oaks Golf Club in West Dundee, Illinois. Bobby provided 130 guests with insights into his early days that were spent close to racing, helping to prep Mike's Porsche race car, and travelling to sports car races in many parts of the country. Those formative years set the stage for Bobby's increasingly competitive career in Motorsports. Mike Rahal was a competitor at Meadowdale International Raceways during his racing career in the 1960s, and clearly had a positive influence on son Bobby's winning formula for success.

Guests at this year's Winter event had an opportunity to meet with Bobby to have books and memorabilia signed throughout the evening. A Silent Auction of Motorsports related items benefitted MIRPA, and Bobby was happy to sign many of those items. A live auction of several select items was also conducted by Len Besinger after the dinner. I personally want to thank all of our guests and sponsors for a most enjoyable evening of friendship and bench racing, with a special thanks to Bobby and Mike!

Linda Daro

# McKee Engineering - Rich History of Innovation

Bob McKee has made an impact to just about every form of Motorsports through his team at McKee Engineering. Those close to Road Racing will instantly be able to identify Bob's Sports Racers, CanAm, and Formula 5000 car contributions, including the Howmet turbine powered cars that were developed in the late 1960's and were in competition into the early 1970's. Bob's involvement at Indy also stands out as a key area of contribution. McKee Engineering has also developed a wide range of vehicles and components that were not all intended for racing, and their development may be virtually unknown to the racing community.

Bob will be hosting the first of the MIRPA sponsored *Race Shop Open House* tours on April 16th, 2011 at his company's location in Lake Zurich, Illinois. Bob will be on hand to take guests through the history of McKee Engineering, including discussion on some of the showcase projects like the electric cars that were developed there. Plan to attend and learn more about Bob's Race Shop.

The Sundancer Electric Car (*shown at right*) was just one of many electric cars developed by McKee Engineering in the early 1970s as a solution to efficient urban transportation. The Sundancer was exhibited at the first symposium on low pollution power systems development held at the Marriott Motor Inn in Ann Arbor Michigan.

The Sundancer was also featured in the February, 1972 issue of *Mechanix Illustrated Magazine* in an in-depth review by the legendary Tom McCahill. The Sundancer was billed as a "Practical" Electric Car in the article that provided technical design details in addition to the road test and performance data. With a top speed of around 60 MPH, the acceleration figures were respectable for this car.

The Howmet TX (*shown below*) was an American sports prototype racing car designed in 1968 to test the competitive use of a gas turbine engine in sports car racing. Planned by racing driver Ray Heppenstall, the TX combined a chassis built by McKee Engineering, turbine engines leased from Continental Aviation & Engineering, and financial backing and materials from the Howmet Corporation.



Following completion of the two Howmet TXs, the cars were brought to the 24 Hours of Daytona, the opening round of the 1968 International Championship for Makes. Although both cars were in attendance, only the newer of the two was entered in the race; the other car was kept as a spare. The driving team of Heppenstall, Dick Thompson, and Ed Lowther qualified with a lap time seventh fastest overall. Several competitors made early refueling stops allowing the Howmet to improve to third place but on lap 34 the turbine wastegate failed to reopen, giving the driver too much power for the corner, resulting in a spin and retirement.

By the 12 Hours of Sebring a few months later, the TX was able to improve its pace, this time qualifying third, only a second behind a Porsche 907 and a Ford GT40. The turbine ran reliably at first but, as the race continued, debris damaged the turbine and caused

it to shake loose from its mounts. The TX was eventually retired after six hours. Following Sebring, the International Championship returned to Europe, and the Howmet team followed. They entered the BOAC 500 at Brands Hatch. Wastegate problems once again caused the car to wreck, this time after only seven laps. Staying in Britain, the Howmet team entered a national sprint race at Oulton Park for British driver Hugh Dibley. The failure of a starter motor during a pit stop, however, once again denied the TX the possibility of finishing the hour-long event. The TX returned to the United States to contest the SCCA National Championship rather than stay in Europe for the remainder of the International Championship. Closer to home, the problems with the experimental TX were able to be overcome as the car finished its first race, the Vandergraft Trophy in New Cumberland, West Virginia. Heppenstall drove the car to a second place finish, setting a new lap record for the circuit. Following a retirement in Michigan, the TX next arrived at the Heart of Dixie event in Huntsville, Alabama. The TX dominated the event, winning a qualifying race and the main event. These two victories marked the first-ever wins by a turbine-powered car in a racing event. (Source: Wikipedia and competitor input)

## ***The Monza Wall Newsletter - About Us***

"The Monza Wall" is the official newsletter publication of The Meadowdale International Raceways Preservation Association (MIRPA). The almost quarterly publication is provided to the members of the MIRPA organization. Material published herein may not be reprinted without permission from the MIRPA Organization. The opinions and information presented in this newsletter are the best-effort results of our collective minds. We welcome your input and clarity on topics that you feel may need additional background. We request the opportunity to preserve your stories of Meadowdale. Please take a few moments and send us some of your favorite memories/photos.

Article submission is encouraged and accepted in MS Word format or as plain text format via eMail. When submitting photos or artwork, please request the material to be returned if that is desired.

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## First Saturday Of The Month: "Coffee & Cars" in Cary, IL



Ronnie Kaplan (right) previews a draft of the new Meadowdale Book that Philip Aleo (left) has been working on for several years. Phil is targeting the publishing date for August, 2011, with availability at the September "Motorsports & Memories" car show sponsored by MIRPA on September 17th. You never know who you are going to meet at the first Saturday of the month, "Coffee & Cars" event hosted by Driveable Dreams in Cary, IL.



Don Devine, took time out to sign a set of posters that have been autographed by competitors that have raced at Meadowdale International Raceways. If you raced at MIR, plan to stop in and sign the poster at the monthly "Coffee & Cars" get together. You will find some interesting bench racing, memorabilia, information about upcoming events, and there is always a donut and a cup of coffee available.

### **Meadowdale International Raceways Preservation Association Individual Membership Application Fee: \$35 Club or Organization Membership Application Fee: \$100**

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Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to MIRPA, and Mail to:

**Meadowdale International Raceways Preservation Association  
300 Jandus Rd. #109  
Cary, IL 60013**

## 2011 Meadowdale Event Schedule

### Saturday, April 16th: Race Shop Open House hosted by Bob McKee

MIRPA is please to announce the first Race Shop Open House that will be held at McKee Engineering in Lake Zurich Illinois on April 16th. Bob McKee will share insights into a wide range of unique Motorsport, and specialty vehicle development projects that his company has delivered. Guests may attend between 11:00 AM and 3:00 PM. Lunch will be served. The cost is \$20 for MIRPA members, \$30 for non-members. Registration forms are available at: [www.mirpa.org](http://www.mirpa.org)

### Saturday, September 17th: Motorsports & Memories Car Show

Plans are being made for the 3rd annual Meadowdale Motorsports & Memories Car show. The event will be held at MIR, Raceway Woods in Carpentersville, Illinois. We are currently seeking volunteers, vendors, car clubs and community groups to help ensure the success of the event. If you are interested, contact Linda Daro at [ld1enterprise@aol.com](mailto:ld1enterprise@aol.com) or at 847-421-2891.

### First Saturday of Every Month - Join us for Coffee & Cars

Join MIRPA members and guests in sharing a donut and discussion at Driveable Dreams in Cary, Illinois between 8:00 and 12:00 noon. Meadowdale memorabilia, photos, and motorsports bench racing is featured.

Please check our website for up-to-date information: [www.mirpa.org](http://www.mirpa.org)

## Support Our MIRPA Sponsors



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Warrenville, IL 60555-2818 USA

### First Saturday of the Month



Coffee & Cars 8:00 am - Noon

300 Jandus #109

Cary, IL 60013

Info: [www.driveabledreams.net](http://www.driveabledreams.net)

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