

Press Release

March 19, 2007

RE: Death of Jack McAfee

On Saturday March 10th, Southern California sports car legend Jack Ernest McAfee died at the age of 84 from liver cancer. He was diagnosed with the disease just two weeks previously and spent his remaining days at a hospice home in Long Beach CA.

Long before he was old enough to drive, Jack's passion for cars and racing was fueled as a spectator at the famous Gilmore Stadium race track. The sounds and smells of the Offy powered midjets were intoxicating, not to mention the excitement of the racing itself. Wanting to get in on the "action" himself, Jack lied about his age and joined the Hollywood Throttlers hot rod club. After hopping up a Ford model-A that he bought for \$14, Jack's first run on at Muroc dry lake yielded an 84.9 mph average speed. Through dry lakes racing, Jack started meeting many of Southern California's most notable hot rodders and racers, and soon found himself making payments on a HAL sprint car, then owned by 12 time Indy driver Babe Stapp.

WWII put a halt to racing and sent Jack to the South Pacific where he was an aviation mechanic on the island of Espiritos Santos. After serving 4 years, Jack returned to open his own garage in Manhattan Beach CA where he crossed paths with a wealthy customer named Tony Paravano. Jack invited Paravano to watch him run his HAL sprint car at Carrell Speedway in Gardena, and Tony was instantly bitten with the racing bug. Throughout the next several years, McAfee's driving talents combined with Paravano's cars yielded some very impressive results including two top-ten finishes in the grueling "Carrera Panamericana" race, and several overall wins in big V12 Ferraris.

While doing a custom engine installation job at Ernie McAfee's garage (no relation) in Studio City, Jack met another wealthy racing enthusiast named John Edgar. As was the case with Paravano, Edgar put Jack behind the best sports cars that Europe had to offer, including a wickedly powerful Ferrari 375+ which they entered in the 1954 Carrera Panamericana. Shortly after exceeding 180 mph on the Tehuantepec straight, a transmission bearing seized locking up the rear tires. The car went off the road and rolled over; co-driver and friend Ford Robinson was killed instantly while McAfee was knocked unconscious but survived.

Wanting to drive something lighter with better handling, McAfee had Edgar purchase a Porsche 550 sypder. Jack fell in love with the handling which allowed him to slide the car through the corners; a style of driving not common to sports car racing. With McAfee driving and Porsche trained mechanic Vasek Polak turning the wrenches, Jack would go on to win the 1956 SCCA National Sports Car class F Championship. Two years later, Vasek would field his own 550 spyder with McAfee driving. Together the duo would earn an astounding 18 top-3 finishes that year to win the 1958 SCCA Pacific Coast Crown.

Regardless of success in racing, McAfee always approached sports car racing as a hobby. Although he originally had inspirations to become a professional driver like his hero Rex Mays, Jack realized early on that racing for money spoiled the camaraderie he once experienced at the dry lakes. Wanting to run his own business, Jack struck a deal with West coast sports car distributor John von Neumann in November of 1952 and opened up one of the first Porsche-VW dealerships in Southern California. Jack was only 29 years old at the time, and still holds the record for being the youngest Porsche dealer ever.

Following his career in car sales, McAfee would go on the road working for Porsche's factory support group and numerous other racing teams including those of Vasek Polak, Dick Barbour, and John Fitzpatrick. Eventually he stopped traveling but remained busy, first as General Manager for Colgan Custom Car Bras, and later for Chick Iverson Motors in Newport Beach as the Service Manager.

His last remaining years were spent playing golf, cards and billiards. His zest for life and more importantly people, kept him young beyond his years until it was finally time to "move on".

Per his wishes, no public service will be held.