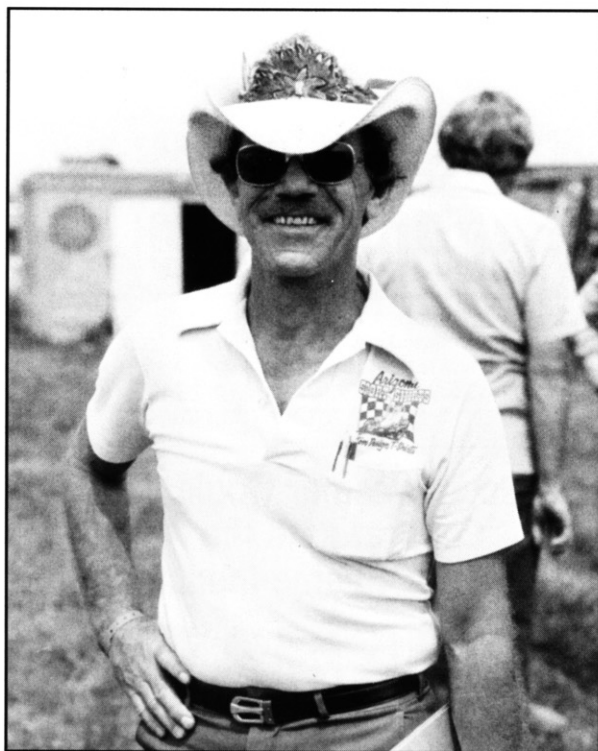


## JACK MILLER



Jack Miller

Gene Marderness Photo

Jack R. Miller was born in Danvers, Ill., on October 25, 1935, to parents Roy and Josephine Miller. He had three brothers, Gus, Carl, and Keith.

Like most young men in America in the 1950's and 60's who liked anything with wheels, the Miller boys grew up idolizing dirt track drivers like A.J. Foyt, Don Branson, Al Unser and Mario Andretti. They seemed larger than life to kids in a small central Illinois town. According to Jack, "My dad would take the family to the Illinois State Fair every year when the big cars were racing. My interest for racing evolved from enjoying racing as a kid. I grew up in a family that loved racing."

Two of the boys, Keith and Gus, became involved racing cars in the area. Local motorcycle racing attracted the other two, Jack as racer and Carl as owner. Said Jack, "I was based at Rantoul, Ill.

in the Air Force. 'Bubby' Jones was racing motorcycles back then and I rode in the area also. When I didn't qualify for the feature, I would go to the stand and do the announcing of the race. They paid more money for that than I could ever have won racing."

Miller's announcing career was officially underway by 1958. According to Jack, "Bobby Baugh, who was one of the best ever, got me started announcing. I did several motorcycle shows for him when he had another job somewhere else."

Jack was traveling the Midwest, announcing American Motorcyclist Association (AMA) regional and national events. Jack recently wrote, "In the mid-'60s, Shane Carson's father, Bud, pretty much changed my life forever. Bud had heard me announce a couple of AMA National Championship motorcycle races at the Oklahoma State Fairgrounds half-mile and offered me a job working with his MAR-CAR organization. It was a wonderful time in my life, as I was learning about open-wheel dirt champ cars at Bud Carson's Friday night races and then on Sundays, I got to be part of the IMCA (International Motor Contest Association) sprint car races. Before he would let me announce any of his shows, I had to learn every job at the track. It gave me a much better view of what was really going on."

While in Oklahoma City in the late Sixties, Miller worked as a weatherman on weekdays, and as a race/show announcer on weekends. It was in the early Seventies that Miller discovered sprint car racing. According to Jack, "I really got hooked on sprints. I was working some shows for Devil's Bowl promoter Lanny Edwards and all the action and excitement really appealed to me."

Jack Miller became involved in sprint car racing of an interesting time in the sport's history. It was going through a transitional period where many of the traditional 'big car' fairgrounds dates were being replaced by special events at tracks that were built specially for super-modifieds or sprint cars. Thus, the accomplished announcer/public relations man worked with some of the top promoters and sanctioning officials in the business in both of those environments.

Much of Miller's announcing style was gained from two of his clients in the early Seventies, the Joie Chitwood Thrill Show and Evel Kneivel. Miller says, "I've learned that show business is a heck of a big part of auto racing. The announcer brings in the show business. You want the fans to go away saying 'Boy, I want to come back.' An announcer should talk with the fans, not at them."

Jack announced his first Knoxville National Sprint Car Championships, a jewel in the sport's 'triple crown', in 1974. At that event, he worked side-by-side with Chris Economaki and a host of other talented announcers. He has also provided color commen-

## JACK MILLER, CONTINUED

tary at both of the other jewels, Manzanita Speedway's Western World Championships in Phoenix with Gary Gerould and Windy McDonald, and the Pacific Coast Championships at Ascot Park with Gerould and Bruce Flanders.

In 1975, Jack went to work at the Knoxville Raceway in Iowa and was their regular announcer and public relations person for two years. Always one to find work in the off-season, Jack managed the bowling alley in Knoxville.

The announcer with a gypsy lifestyle then headed to Tampa, Fla., where he has resided every winter since. Early in '78, a call from Edwards landed Jack a job announcing the first-ever World of Outlaws (WoO) race at Devil's Bowl. Miller followed most of Ted Johnson's tour that season, building his reputation as the 'World of Outlaws announcer'.

It was Jack's enthusiasm, and identification and interaction with the fans, that made Jack Miller so popular with the ticket-buying public at sprint car events nationwide. Jack's cry of "Holy Cow!" into the microphone became his trademark at races from Florida to California. But nowhere was it more identifiable with him than at the Knoxville Nationals, where he entertained and educated the massive crowds each August for

twenty-five years. Said Jack, "It is just fun announcing. You can see the results of you labor. Announcing is the one true thing that I enjoy."

Although racing grew dramatically during Jack's announcing career, from a carnival-like sport to a corporate-driven industry, he remained a champion of the grass-roots fans and the low-buck teams. Whether it was at the Knoxville Nationals, the Belleville, Ks., Midget Nationals or the Devil's Bowl Winternationals, Jack told the stories of those that struggled just to compete, let alone conquer.

Throughout his career, Jack has donated generous amounts of time and energy to charitable efforts within racing. He was one of the founding supporters of the Knoxville-based non-profit National Sprint Car Hall of Fame & Museum Foundation. His efforts to raise funds for injured drivers through auctions, golf tournaments and other events contributed to Jack's selection in 1998 to receive the National Sprint Car Poll's "Outstanding Contribution to the Sport Award".

In recent years, Miller's stories can be read as well as heard. He has written articles in many event programs, and he has a monthly column in "Open Wheel" maga-

zine where he has the opportunity to reach tens of thousands of fans at a time.

Looking back on his career, Jack has said, "I did it as more of a hobby than anything else. I made a little income, but not much. The last 15 to 20 years I did it full-time. I still didn't make a profit, but it was something I loved doing. I owe a lot of this to my brothers, who supported me throughout my early years, and my wife who allowed me to travel the country and have fun while she stayed at home and worked."

Jack and Louise Miller currently reside in Odessa, Fla., where he announces at the East Bay Raceway in Gibsonton. He has three children, Vicky Lynn, Angela, and Tommy, from a previous marriage. Although Jack is slowly pulling the curtain down on a long and successful career of race announcing, he still enjoys heading to Tulsa, Okla., each January with Louise to call the Chili Bowl Midget Nationals for long-time friends Lanny Edwards and Emmett Hahn. It is just one of fifty-four tracks in seventeen states at which he's done the same since 1958... Holy Cow!