

Fred "The Flying Dutchman" Harbach

Fred Harbach, the "Flying Dutchman," was born and raised in Huntington. He met his wife, Gerry, in the school there and he lived and worked his entire life in Huntington, where he operated T and F Auto Body on New York Avenue for more than 40 years. Fred started his racing career in the early fifties at Freeport Stadium, driving a 1937 Ford Coupe.



Fred Harbach posing for photo in #X90 before Main Event at Islip Speedway (Ford Pinto Bodied Modified)

Fred competed at Freeport for about one year and then switched to NASCAR action at Islip Speedway. Then when Islip Speedway closed in 1984, Fred moved over to Riverhead Speedway and continued his winning ways. During his 41 years of competition, Fred won many track championships, including several at Islip Speedway, Freeport and Riverhead Raceways, where he won his last race and the 1992 Riverhead Modified Track Championship. He was, in fact, a member of a select group of drivers to win titles at all three Long Island tracks. Fred competed at tracks from Maine to Florida. He also won track championships at Wall Stadium, Old Bridge Speedway, and New Egypt Speedway, all in New Jersey. In 1964, he was the NASCAR Sportsman Champion at Islip Speedway and at New Jersey's New Egypt and Old Bridge Speedways. Fred was also a charter member of the All-Star Racing League which pitted the best drivers from all the tracks in the Northeast against each other. What a show! Fred had the honor of winning the very first All-Star Race at the Albany-Saratoga Speedway in 1967. As far as I can tell, Fred won well over 400 races in his career. In 1977, Fred won a very special race at Islip Speedway, the 50-lap Larry Mendlesohn Memorial. Fred was a close friend of Larry's. In 1993, Fred was inducted into The Race of Champions Modified Hall of Fame.

Fred was always ready to offer advice or assistance to fellow drivers and was well liked by his competitors wherever he raced and he raced against the best. Aside from the victories and championships, Fred had another side he loved: kids. So after all the races were over, he instructed the pit crew to leave the car off the trailer so the kids could come over and sit in the car for photos and autographs. Also, Fred installed a light in the car so the kids could get a full view of the inside of the car. Win, lose or draw, Fred loved to party after all of the races with plenty of food and drinks for everyone. As a matter of fact, on the last night of racing at the Islip Speedway, Fred had the largest ever and even had a juke box playing till the wee hours of the morning.

Some of Fred's car numbers were #18, #89, #x89 and #x90, his last car. Fred loved to build his own racecars but sometimes he drove for other car



Fred Harbach posing in the pits at Islip Speedway with #18 Butch Miceika 1935 Pontiac Coupe

owners such as Butch Miceika who was also from Huntington. Butch and his wife, Dee, campaigned a beautiful Pontiac Coupe, powered by a Chevrolet engine, painted blue with yellow numbers and lettering and "THE FLYING DUTCHMAN" in white on the roof and both sides. Fred won many races with this car both on dirt and paved tracks. This Miceika/Harbach #18 modified coupe is restored back to its original condition as it was when it last raced. The car is now owned

by my good friend, Ray Herold, of Dover, Pennsylvania, a former Nassau County policeman and pitman on a few cars at Islip Speedway and Riverhead Raceway. Anyone interested in seeing it can be so when Ray brings it to the Annual Freeport-Islip-Riverhead Reunion on Sunday, August 29 at Riverhead Raceway, beginning at 9 am. There will be many other famous cars on hand that day along with many retired drivers, photo albums and auto racing memorabilia. Bring your autograph book and camera and enjoy the day's activities.



Fred Harbach posing for photo before race at Islip Speedway, driving 1937 Chevy Coach #X89



Fred Harbach after winning Larry Mendlesohn Memorial Race, driver of Islip Pace Car (Dot Jaekel, Larry Mendlesohn's office manager)

I had the pleasure of racing side by side for many years with Fred Harbach and although it has been several years since he died in 1995, he is still sorely missed. In 1996, Fred was posthumously inducted into the Suffolk County Sports Hall of Fame. Fred and Gerry raised their daughter, Joanne, and two sons, Alan and Richard, who both had successful racing careers of their own. Fred's helmet, shirt, uniform, wallet photos and many other items from his racing career are displayed at the Himes Museum. ●

Marty Himes is the owner-curator of the nationally recognized Himes Museum of Motor Racing Nostalgia in Bay Shore. (631) 666-4912

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