



Stock Car Racing in the '50s: Pictures and Memories From Western New York and Northwestern Pennsylvania

Mr. Ford Easton

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Human beings have always been driven to compete. Foot racing became horse racing became automobile racing, and we continue to redefine the word “fast.” Whether you prefer the tales of American bootleggers customizing Prohibition-era automobiles to outrun the law or the natural progression of cars replacing horses on the streets and on the racetrack, automobile racing flourished as a sport for many years in the United States before stock car racing truly came into its own in the 1950s. The economy rebounded after the end of World War II. The GIs brought home skills and knowledge about advances in technology, and civilians had learned how to get the most out of old machines during the war. Scrap steel was no longer reserved exclusively for the War Effort, and the junkyards were filling up with worn out cars as people started to invest in new ones to replace them. A very competitive stock car could be purchased at the junk yard for \$25 or so. By adding another \$75, a clever builder could make it race ready. Teams of weekend warriors could compete head to head against well-funded, highly trained teams and have a real shot at winning. It was a perfect combination: knowledgeable mechanics and fearless drivers in cars that the public recognized from their daily life. The grandstands filled and new tracks turned up all across the countryside to satisfy the public’s interest in watching these race cars compete. Associations formed to standardize the tracks, which were often farm fields that had been lovingly sculpted and paved by the farmers themselves to give the drivers and their crews a place to showcase their talent. These men and women entertained, awed, and inspired a generation of "motor heads" and race fans. This book is a tribute to the drivers and other figures from Western New York and Northwestern Pennsylvania who shaped stock car racing in the 1950s.

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