



Making Memories At Lime Rock Park (Part of our race weekend coverage on TheRaceSite.com)

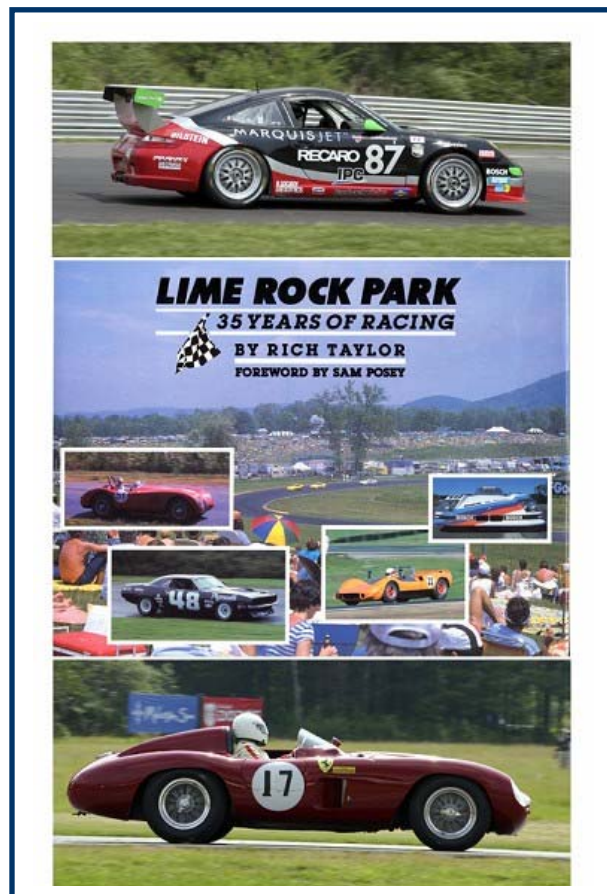
05/28/07 - © Andrew S. Hartwell

"My first ever view of Lime Rock was from the grassy hill overlooking the first turn from the outside of the track. I was 13 and already in love with racing, but my contact with the sport was strictly through books. Now here I was actually looking at D Jaguars and Maseratis (it was 1957). Real racing cars, almost in my back yard. Lime Rock was like a miracle."

Those words were written by Sharon, Connecticut's own accomplished racer, author and broadcaster, Sam Posey. They appear in the foreword to Rich Taylor's wonderful history of Lime Rock Park entitled, Lime Rock Park: 35 Years Of Racing. (Sharon Mountain Press, 1992) Posey grew up in a small town just a few short miles away from what was just a gravel pit before it became his point of awakening to the world of real race cars and real racers.

The timing for Posey's first visit to the track was perfect as it was in 1957 that Connecticut became home to what is arguably the most beautiful racing venue in the United States. Not the largest of facilities or the one with the longest circuit length, but certainly the only one that can say it lies nestled within a most beautiful, green valley. In this instance, that valley lies within the majestic Berkshire Mountains. And Lime Rock Park is but one of very few that can claim 50 years of continuous auto racing history.

It is hard to believe another 15 years have relinquished all their dawns and sunsets - and so many green and checkered flags have been waved - since Taylor's book first became available. (You may still be able to pick up a copy at the Driving Impressions store located in the paddock at Lime Rock. And you might try the Green Mountain Books vendor store in the track midway this weekend.) And in the five decades since that first race on April 28, 1957, so many famous



and infamous people have written a line or two into the history that is Lime Rock Park. And they used seat time in almost every form of professional - and amateur - racing series to do it.

And in each and every year of the last 50, new fans were introduced to 'real racing' by coming to Lime Rock Park. And each of them acquired memories that have stayed with them ever since, just as those first memories have stayed with Sam Posey.

For example, racing fan Nick Abbott sent this note to Lime Rock Park and it appears on the track website at: <http://www.limerock.com/content/nickabbott>

"The fondest memories of a boy and his dad began for me in 1960, when I was 11 years old. Sports cars were always a part of my father's life, and we began our road trips to Lime Rock quite early on Saturday morning - breakfast at home before cramming two lawn chairs into the XK - 120 and picking up route 44 in West Hartford a few miles from our house.

"The Jaguar's (is there a better named sports car?) throaty roar whisked us through those northwest towns and we never lost our jaunty British style caps. What a thrill to pay our fees and drive over the short bridge to the infield as cars brrrraaapped by underneath; setting up our chairs in the same spot each time - on the hill overlooking the " S " curves ...sometimes we would get a pit pass, allowing close inspection of the marvelous machines.

"Lime Rock was also the setting for "Jag Weekend " when the JCNA Empire Division took it over for three days of nearly all Jaguar events... those early days of father-son trips to Lime Rock are the fondest of all my boyhood memories... "

This circuit has hosted virtually every major and minor form of road racing one can imagine. Just a broad sampling of some of the series hosted here includes: Trans-Am, SCCA Regional Races, SPEED World Challenge, Grand-Am (Prototype and GT), IMSA Camel GT and GTP series, Motorola Cup, American Le Mans Series, United States Road Racing Championship (Original and the pre-Grand-Am version), Formula 5000/L&M 5000, Skip Barber Dodge Miata Challenge, Vintage Racing, Formula Vee, Can-Am (the second incarnation) NASCAR Busch, and much more.

And the list of drivers who have tried to keep their momentum up a bit faster than everyone else is as long as an Alaskan day. Some of the more notable include: John Fitch, Mark Donohue, George Follmer, Hurley Haywood, Dan Gurney, Brian Redman, Phil Hill, Masten Gregory, Briggs Cunningham, Sam Posey, David Hobbs, Hans Stuck, Jim Hall, Innes Ireland, Pedro Rodriguez, Peter Gregg, Peter Revson, Vic Elford, John Buffum, Elliot Forbes-Robinson, Butch Leitzinger, James Weaver, Andy Wallace, Bob Tullius, Lyn St. James, Al Holbert, Ron Fellows, Bob Sharp, Bobby Rahal and Jack Baldwin. And that isn't even a fraction of the number that have plied their trade at speed on this bumpy little race circuit.

With this weekend's series of races a new half-century of road racing history begins to be written into the books and into the minds of young race fans who, like Sam Posey, are probably coming to Lime Rock Park for their first time. And as it was for Posey in 1957, today's top driving talents such as Andy Lally, Wolf Henzler, Kelly Collins, Randy Pobst, Mike Galati, Peter Cunningham, Spencer Pumpelly, Patrick Long and Craig Stanton will be the ones to watch and think back fondly on years from now.

The KONI Challenge, Grand-Am Rolex GT, and SPEED World Challenge races are fueling up those new memories and at the same time reminding all of us - no matter if this is our first or our

50th visit to LRP - that this is the place where the magic is born, and born again with each new year that finds the sounds of race cars echoing off the surrounding mountains.

This weekend, who else will have their first taste of Lime Rock Park? And what memories will they carry with them from having been here in person? There is really only one way to find out and that is to come out to Lime Rock Park and be here as tomorrow's history is being made. You don't have to be a youngster like Sam Posey was. Any age is a great age to experience Lime Rock Park in person.

And did we mention how beautiful this place is?

