



VINTAGE

# IRL: INNOVATIVE CAR BUILDER EPPERLY DIES AT 87

*INDIANAPOLIS, Thursday, Jan. 11, 2000 – A.J. Watson was the premier builder of "roadster" race cars for the Indianapolis 500 from the mid-1950s until rear-engine machines took over 10 years later. But there was a challenger. ...*

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INDIANAPOLIS, Thursday, Jan. 11, 2000 — A.J. Watson was the premier builder of "roadster" race cars for the Indianapolis 500 from the mid-1950s until rear-engine machines took over 10 years later. But there was a challenger. Quincy D. Epperly, known as Quin, built cars that ran right at the front and battled the Watson roadsters for victory. In fact, in 1957 Jim Rathmann drove an Epperly chassis to second place behind winner Sam Hanks. Epperly also handled the bodywork construction on Hanks' revolutionary "laydown" Belond Special in 1957. Epperly, 87, died Jan. 7 at his Paso Robles, Calif., home. A memorial service will take place later this month. "He built some nice cars," Watson said of Epperly. "He didn't build as many cars as I did. I thought the laydown was pretty radical. They were pretty cars, streamlined. I got to know him later on. We had a good time." Born in Virginia, Epperly moved to California and was an unemployed aircraft sheet-metal worker following the end of World War II. He replied to a blind newspaper classified ad and was hired by noted race car builder Frank Kurtis. The midget racing craze started immediately after World War II, and Epperly helped construct some 300 of the 782 Kurtis Kraft midgets that were sent out of the Kurtis shop. Epperly also had a hand in building the first Novi front-drive car for the Indianapolis 500. After working from 1946 to 1950 for Kurtis, Epperly hit the racing circuit, maintaining the M.A. Walker machine and then Murrell Belanger's car. Unhappy with the travel, he returned to California and joined another legendary car builder, Lujie Lesovsky, in building a new Belanger chassis. The partnership lasted 2 ½ years, and the results included a dirt car for Lindsey Hopkins and a couple of champ cars built from scratch. Epperly opened his shop in Lawndale, Calif., after the 1953 Indianapolis 500 and concentrated mostly on repairing wrecked race cars. Then he took on the project of building a new car for the 1955 race, driven by Jim Rathmann. Epperly built two laydowns for 1958. George Amick drove one to second behind Jimmy Bryan - who was in Hanks' winning car from 1957 - while Tony Bettenhausen placed fourth in the other. Epperly followed with two more chassis for 1959 that Bettenhausen and Johnny Boyd drove to fourth and sixth, respectively. Epperly


collaborated with George Salih in building the Metal Cal car for Jimmy Bryan in 1960 that was shortened in length for better handling. Paul Goldsmith brought Epperly a third-place finish that year with the same car that Amick drove to second in 1958. Lloyd Ruby drove an Epperly car to eighth in 1961, and Don Branson and Jim Hurtubise started from the front row in similar Epperly machines that year. Then in 1962, though outnumbered 12-4 by Watson cars, Bobby Marshman was able to put an Epperly chassis on the outside of the front row and finish fifth. Noting the upcoming move to the rear-engine car at Indy, traditionalist Epperly began a project to build a rear-engine laydown, but the car never reached fruition. He gave up car building and concentrated on his repair business until his retirement.

Epperly is survived by sons John and David.  
-IRNLS/IMS-


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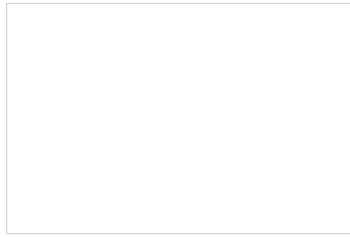
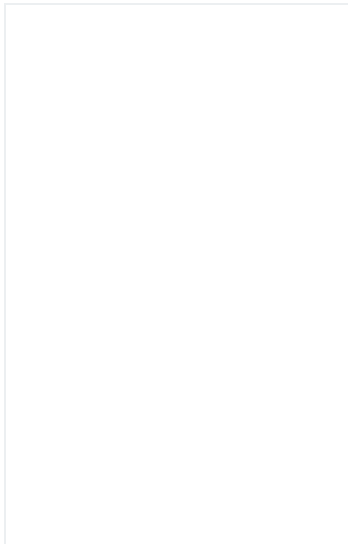
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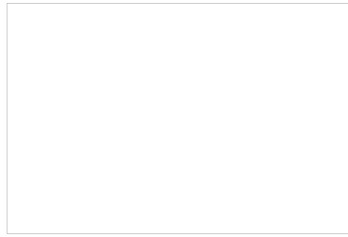
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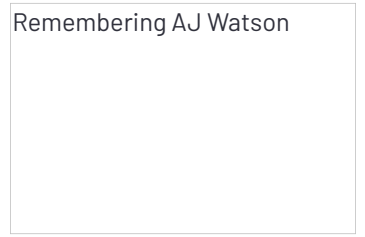
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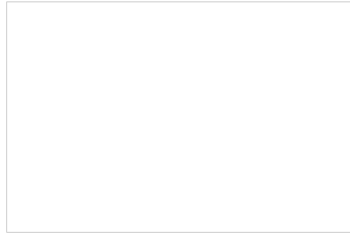
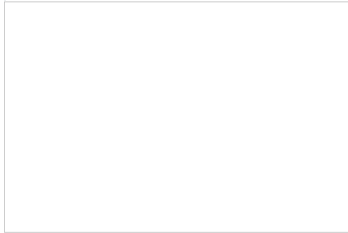


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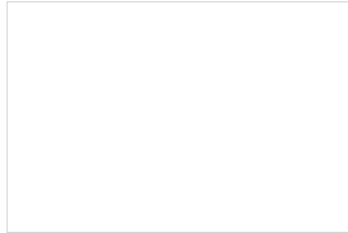


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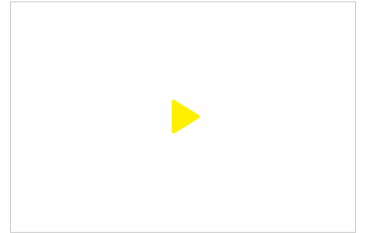
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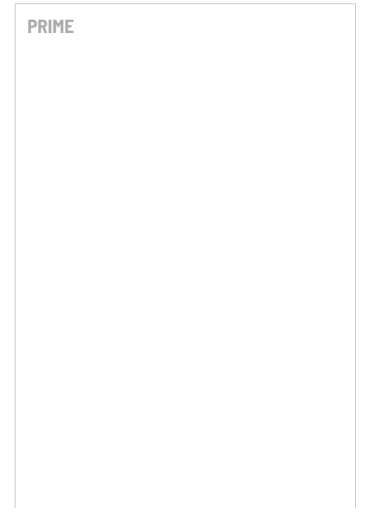
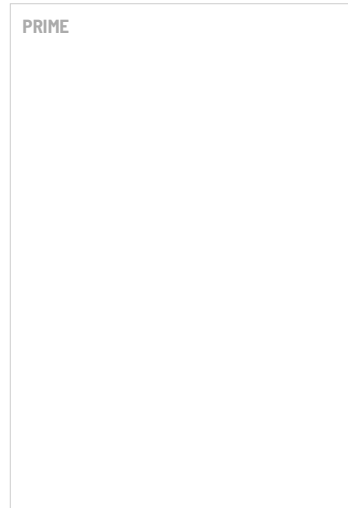
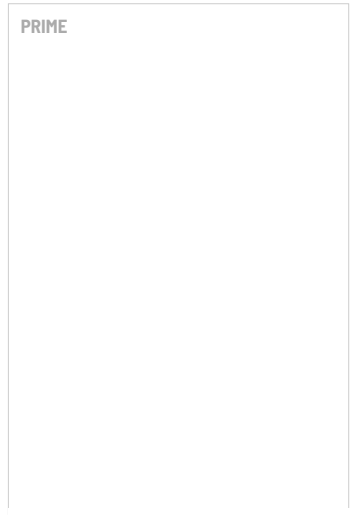
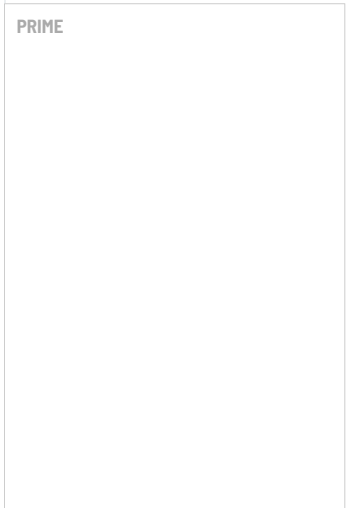
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