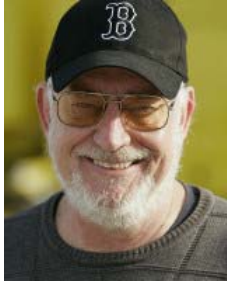


The Way It Is/ Some fond memories of Carl Haas

by Gordon Kirby
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Carl Haas has passed away after a long illness. Haas, 86, was one of America's most successful race team owners who enjoyed wide influence in his other roles as the country's most prolific race car salesman and chairman for many years of the SCCA's board of governors. He also promoted races at the Milwaukee Mile and sat on Road America's board of directors.

Carl owned and operated Newman/Haas Racing from 1983-2011 in partnership with Paul Newman who lost his battle with cancer in 2008. Haas ran the team out of his base in Lincolnshire, Illinois and Newman/Haas is ranked second only to Team Penske on IndyCar's all-time winners list with a record of 107 wins, 109 pole positions and eight championships. Haas's statistics are even more impressive when you add his team's 39 Can-Am and Formula 5000 wins and seven championships from the nineteen-seventies and early eighties.

Haas caught the racing bug in 1951 when a friend took him to a road race through the surrounding roads and streets of Elkhart Lake. The race was a forerunner to the creation a few years later of the great Road America road course but that summer day in 1951 caught young Carl's imagination and he was soon racing an MGTD in SCCA club races.



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"A friend of mine took me to a race at Elkhart Lake," Carl recalled a few years ago. "Prior to that, I wasn't that interested in cars. But I went up to Elkhart in 1951 and saw this racing going on. It looked exciting and I was really taken by the race. I got interested and bought a car, a 1952 MGTD. That was the first

sports car I owned. In fact, until that point I didn't really own a car. So I got into racing and loved it. For quite a while it had nothing to do with business. It was my racing, what I loved to do."

From Chicago's north side, Haas won some races aboard his MG and soon traded up to a Porsche spyder. Through the fifties and early sixties Haas established himself as a race-winning amateur SCCA sports car racer and began to make his name buying and selling sports cars of all types. He eventually started a business called Carl Haas Auto which sold Elva, McLaren and Lola racing cars and Hewland gearboxes and parts. During the sixties and seventies Haas Auto grew into the USA's largest seller of road racing cars and components to booming SCCA club and professional racing markets.

After retiring from driving Haas started running a race team in 1967 competing in the SCCA's United States Road Racing Championship and the Can-Am series. His first driver was Masten Gregory followed by Chuck Parsons, Peter Revson, Jackie Stewart, David Hobbs, Brian Redman, Patrick Tambay, Alan Jones, Jacky Ickx and Mario Andretti. Between 1971-'80 Haas's cars won 39 Can-Am and Formula 5000 races and seven championships.

During this time famed actor/racer Paul Newman ran his own Can-Am team, buying cars from Haas. But the 'new era' Can-Am series was in trouble and in 1982 as the series stumbled Haas proposed to Newman that they become partners in a new CART Indy car team. Initially, Newman wasn't interested. In fact, he was ready to get out of owning or operating a race team until Carl told him that Mario Andretti was available to drive.

They were surely one of the oddest couples in motor racing history, if not sport of any kind. Newman and Haas were polar opposites in all ways except for their shared passion for motor racing. Despite his success Haas was a shy fellow, a man of few words who was hard to get to know. He had little or no public image, entirely the opposite of Newman who was one of the world's most renowned and accomplished movie stars, an eclectic human being with a wide range of interests who evolved into one of the world's leading charitable givers and a champion for disadvantaged children.



Newman was an equally accomplished amateur sports car racer, winning numerous SCCA races and championships and some Trans-Am races too. He was good enough to co-drive the second-placed Porsche in the 1979 Le Mans 24 Hours and would go on to take third in the 1995 Daytona 24 Hours.

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The marriage between Newman and Haas was consummated near the end of 1982 and Andretti raced the team's Lola in 1983, winning two races and finishing third in CART's Indy car championship. The following year Andretti won six races and swept to the championship as Newman/Haas began to write its way into the history books.

Mario was the team's only driver and its driving force for six years before he was joined in 1989 by son Michael who won Newman/Haas's second CART championship in 1991. Formula One world champion Nigel Mansell drove for Newman/Haas in 1993 and '94 and Mansell took the team's third championship in '93. Mario retired at the end of 1994 and Newman/Haas's fourth championship came in 2002 with Cristiano da Matta driving. Da Matta's championship was followed by a remarkable string of four consecutive Champ Car championships with Sebastien Bourdais from 2004-'07.

"Carl surrounded himself with winners through his whole life," Mario says. "Look back at his history throughout the Can-Am, Formula 5000 and then Indy cars. He always reached for the best in the business to associate himself with. That's one quality that I respected Carl for tremendously and that's what spelled success.

"Look back at the individuals who drove for him and the individuals who worked for him. They were the best--Jackie Stewart, Jacky Ickx and Brian Redman. And the best engineers and team managers--Adrian Newey, Tyler Alexander and Tony Cicale. Carl drew from the cream of the crop.

"Carl would always make the choices to surround himself with the best people and keep them. That's another thing that's to Carl and Berni's credit, the fact that they had continuity of key members in the team. To me, that's huge. You look at the success of any teams in the history of our sport. No matter where you go there's continuity in the key people, and that's what Carl and Berni always maintained at Newman/Haas.

"I always felt that was essential and important so that the culture of the team remained throughout its history. That's why they were strong and successful and have the championships to show for it."



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Andretti emphasized the fact that Haas's life and business was totally immersed in motor racing.

"The thing that I appreciated always from day one about Carl was the fact that he was a hundred and ten percent racer," Mario says. "He was an icon in the sport because he was a part of Lola and Hewland, two manufacturers who were so important in the broad history of our sport in the United States, and he depended on the sport a hundred percent for his financial success. Carl was a hundred percent involved in racing. That was his only focus every day.



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"Any suggestion that I would make Carl never hesitated. He might have had the label of being frugal, but he was frugal in some of the areas where it looked to him like waste. But he was never frugal about paying for the best talent that he could get. Historically, his drivers and engineers probably were the highest-paid in the business."

Mario also underlines Berni Haas's roles in Carl Haas Auto and Newman/Haas.

"Another important point is the old adage that behind every great man there's also a great woman. Berni Haas was always a quiet but big supporter of all aspects of the business and the race team. Carl had a wonderful teammate in Berni who shared everything and was part of all decisions but never in the limelight. Berni was always happy to be very quiet and in the background. You never saw Berni on the podium or taking photo opportunities. But she was a driving force.

"She deserves all the accolades possible but she would never be one to speak to the media or to come forward in any way to be recognized. Berni was Carl's teammate and soulmate one hundred percent and a very strong driving force behind the team.

"Berni was an incredible stabilizing force behind it all. She was very cool and collected. I think she would be the one who would probably show the least emotions. She was a great partner for Carl in making a lot of key decisions, no question about it.

"And of course Paul Newman was a truly great man. He was a tremendous human being, a great actor and artist, and a racer through and through. Paul also became a very close friend and in many ways he was like Berni--quiet, in the background, but always there for you whenever you needed his support. Carl, Berni and Paul were a fantastic combination and I'm proud to have been a part of what they created and achieved."

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