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Indy 500 Memories: An Oral History of "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing"

Art Garner, Marc B. Spiegel

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More than 150 drivers, fans, celebrities and others share their personal stories and remembrances of the world’s most famous auto race. Twenty different race winners representing more than 40 victories are among those sharing memories, including the greatest names in the sport: Foyt, Unser, Andretti, Rutherford, Cheever, Mears, Sullivan, Rahal, Montoya, Castroneves and Kanaan. Others include Gurney, Guthrie, Goodyear, Patrick, Power, Stewart, St. James and many more. The book is as much about dreams as it is memories, from A.J. Foyt listening to the 500 in his daddy’s garage as young boy, to Bev Patrick bursting into tears as her daughter, Danica, becomes the first woman to lead the 500. There is laughter and tears, triumph and tragedy, ranging from Evi Gurney hiding under a stack of sweaty driver uniforms in the back of a car so she can sneak into Gasoline Alley, to Indy’s darkest days in 1964 and 1973. The memories are full of surprises and unbridled honesty. “I felt like I was at the point of an arrow that was being hurled forward by a hurricane,” recalled Eddie Cheever. “It was so violent, to control it for 500 miles and finish a race, I thought would be a miracle.” Fans and family have always been an integral part of making the event “The Greatest Spectacle in Racing” and both are well represented in Indy 500 Memories. Whether the stories are about family traditions or secretly spreading a loved one’s ashes on the Speedway’s grounds, they are often as personal and interesting as those of the drivers. From the first memory by Mario Andretti, to the last one of Ryan Hunter-Reay, Indy 500 Memories is sure to invoke surprise, laughter, tears and awe and is a must read for any racing fan.

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