

52nd INDY 500 IS SET

A Suburb of Indianapolis

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Don't sleep in too late Thursday morning if you are interested in the Indianapolis 500-Mile Spectacle.

It is not that the pace car will get away earlier than the customary 9 a.m. (PDT) starting time, but with those turbine cars in the race, nobody knows exactly how early it will end.

There are several ways to enjoy the Indy 500. You can dig into the piggy bank and count out \$235 for a fan-jet trip to the Indiana city on the Agajanian 98 Fan Club, including a \$35 penthouse seat at the track.

For about a five-spot you can visit a selected local theater or the Sports Arena for a closed circuit version of the event.

It is also traditional to mow the lawn or wash the car while Sid Collins and his crew describe the action from atop the pagoda.

Of course, by listening on radio, Sid will tell you about some of the telegrams which pour into the booth, and once again Aggie will be among those interviewed briefly to make it known he is on the scene.

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Most likely all of this ceremony goes to make the Indianapolis 500 truly the greatest spectacle in racing.

Once a driver wins the 500, he never again lacks for an opportunity on the banquet circuit and he is forever an attraction at any subsequent race he enters.

A number of auto drivers from the Redondo-Torrance area have qualified for the Indianapolis 500 down through the years.

Andy Linden came in fourth one year and Don Freeland was about sixth another time, but for the most part hardly a beach-breed had done much better.

Then along came a young man who first got interested in the mechanics of automobiles while washing cars for Oscar Maple Ford in Torrance. He was young Parnelli Jones.

Parnelli started driving hotrods at Ascot Park and became a great competitor. Rapid experience led to the 1963 Indianapolis 500, which he won with a record effort.

No matter what achievements are ahead for Parnelli Jones, he says flatly nothing will ever equal the thrill of winning that race.

But Parnelli may become best remembered in racing history for the incredible 1967 Indy 500, when he drove the first STP Turbine Car No. 40. He ran away with the race from the first turn to a distance of 493 miles later. But a ball-bearing knocked out the gear box and only a compassionate flagman who stopped the race a few minutes later saved Parnelli sixth place money.

Parnelli must be an extreme optimist, for he rationalizes that the turn of events (in publicity, etc.) has done as much good as winning the race. At least this is what he says.

Anyway, the kid who once washed and greased cars at Oscar Maples is now co-owner of the same establishment under the name of Vel's-Parnelli Jones Ford. During the grand opening the other day, there were more racing dignitaries on hand than anywhere this side of Indiana.

Torrance has become a recognized part of the racing world. Hawthorne Blvd. is becoming automobile row. Indy cars are built at a number of nearby garages. Ascot Park is just on the outskirts of town and tremendous racing plants are planned for Riverside and Ontario, a few miles away.

It is fitting, therefore, that the Press-Herald attempt to contribute something to the interests of the racing community by publishing this edition.



PARNELLI JONES . . . The original driver of the STP Turbine Car did not think it was good enough this year. The famous Indianapolis 500 driver from Torrance passed up Thursday's 52nd annual classic.

Spotlight To Be on Turbines

The Indianapolis Speedway 500-Mile Memorial Day Classic will be run for the 52nd time Thursday.

For the second year the STP Turbine-driving car engineered by Andy Granatelli is expected to be in the spotlight. Joe Leonard and Graham Hill will drive the No. 70 and 60 turbine entries.

Parnelli Jones and Ford partner Vel Melitich are trying to dig enough speed out of two Ford-powered cars to get them into the 500 field Memorial Day.

And, even if they make it, they know they cannot win.

There isn't a man at the Speedway today who doesn't predict a "homefree" victory for the STP Lotus turbines

except perhaps owner Andy Granatelli, who said Thursday, "I don't think it's a foregone conclusion. It's a long race."

Last year, of course, it was too long for Jones—seven and one-half miles too long. He drove Granatelli's Turbocar and missed winning the race by three laps.

This year Jones pulled out of the car because he didn't think it would be competitive with the new restrictive engine.

Now that the turbine cars have suddenly unleashed record speeds in the month of May, Jones admits he's given the decision a lot of second thought, and might have made a big mistake.

"I was fooled," said the 34-year-old businessman, wearing his trademark boyish grin. "But Andy was fooled, too. He honestly didn't think the turbines would go this fast."

"I didn't think they would run as good as they are. Sure, (Continued on page 8)

'500' Dates Back to 1909

The history of Indianapolis Motor Speedway goes back to August of 1909 when it was opened as a dirt track and several short races were held.

Because of the dust problem the track was paved with bricks for the opening of the 1910 season. A series of short races was again held during that year, but the fans soon tired of this attraction, and the speedway promoters began looking for a new gimmick to make the track a profitable venture.

The idea of a race of 500 miles was envisioned at the close of the 1910 season and plans for this race were formulated that time.

The first 500 was held on May 30 (Memorial Day) 1911, and attracted the best drivers.

Auto manufacturers built and sponsored most of the cars for these drivers. The Speedway had a seating capacity of 50,000, and parking facilities for 600 cars (most people came by public conveyance). The remaining crowd of 30,000 was allowed to go into the infield, and watched Ray Harroun drive his Marmon Wasp to victory at a speed of 74.59 mph.

Harroun's car was the only one in the event that did not have benefit of a riding mechanic. These mechanics were there to read instruments, maintain fuel pressure, check tire wear, and watch for the other cars.

Ray preferred to cut down on weight and handle these

extra chores himself. He devised the rear view mirror to watch for other cars. This mirror, probably the first auto accessory to be tried at the Speedway, was mounted just in front of the cockpit with a special bracket made at the Marmon factory, and was never patented by either Harroun or the people at the Marmon plant.

For his day's work in winning the first Indy 500, Harroun collected a purse of \$10,000. So many protests were registered against him for not having a mechanic ride with him, that the AAA banned all single seat cars from the track and they were not seen again at the Speedway until 1923.