

USAC Names First Hall of Fame Class

by [NSSN Staff](#)

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SPEEDWAY, Ind. — The United States Auto Club Hall of Fame will debut this May with a dozen inductees, eight selected by a committee of respected motorsports professionals with extensive USAC history and four to be selected through an online vote conducted through social mediums from a list also composed by the selection committee.

The inaugural class will be inducted during ceremonies scheduled May 20 at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. The invitation-only ceremonies, although not open to the general public, will offer one table of seats to the general public through a contest yet to be detailed. The previous night, USAC's TRAXXAS Silver Crown Series competes in the inaugural "Hall of Fame Classic" at Indianapolis Raceway Park.

The eight-member class of inaugural inductees includes J.C. Agajanian, **Mario Andretti**, Tom Binford, Jimmy Bryan, Duane Carter, A.J. Foyt, Tony Hulman and Roger McCluskey.

Agajanian, whose cars won the Indianapolis 500 in 1952 (Troy Ruttman) and 1963 (Parnelli Jones), was the first race organizer in USAC history to reach 250 events presented. Most of those were in USAC's formative years, including many different races series and tracks across the country. His trademark became the Stetson cowboy hat he was rarely seen without. The heir to a fortune built on pig farming and garbage collection, he was partial to the No. 98 and the Turkey Night Grand Prix, a 98-lap USAC Midget race held each Thanksgiving, continues to be a pride of his family. He is a member of numerous motorsports Halls of Fame, including the Auto Racing Hall of Fame International Motorsports Hall of Fame, Motorsports Hall of Fame of America, National Sprint and Midget Halls of Fame and the AAA Motorcycle Hall of Fame. Agajanian passed away May 5, 1984.

Andretti, winner of the 1969 Indianapolis 500, amassed a racing career of immense proportions. The Italian-American Andretti won the 1978 Formula One World title, four Indy Car crowns (three under USAC sanction) and an IROC title. He remains the only driver to win the Indianapolis 500, Daytona 500 (1967) and the Formula One championship. No American has won a Formula One race since Andretti's victory in the 1978 Dutch Grand Prix. He is the only driver to be named U.S. Driver of the Year in three decades (1967, 1978 and 1984) and was the first driver to win Indy Car races in four different decades. In 29 attempts at the Indianapolis 500, Andretti endured numerous disappointments but managed the 1969 victory and seconds in 1981 and 1985 and three poles. In 2000, Associated Press and Racer Magazine named him the Driver of the Century. He is a member of the International Motorsports Hall of Fame, the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame and the Motorsports Hall of Fame of America.

Binford, an Indianapolis-based entrepreneur and philanthropist, was a pioneer and visionary and as such was named Indianapolis 500 Chief Steward for a term lasting from 1974-1995. A leader

in Indianapolis civic affairs, he once held positions on numerous corporate Boards of Directors and was for a while president and CEO of Indiana National Bank. It was Binford whose sensitivity, wise counsel and sincerity was responsible for USAC's impact in the world of motorsports from its early years. He was named USAC president in 1957 and served in that capacity for 12 years, following that as a member of USAC's Executive Committee. A boulevard in Indianapolis is named for Binford, who passed away January 14, 1999.

Bryan won USAC's first two National Driving Championships (1956-1957) and was the lead subject of USAC's commemorative painting adorning the 2006 book "Fifty Years of Speed and Glory," chronicling USAC's first 50 years. The Phoenix, Ariz. native captured the inaugural "Race of Two Worlds" in 1957 in Monza, Italy, the following year won the Indianapolis 500 and scored significant USAC Stock car wins as well. He also finished second at Indy in 1954 and third in 1957. The 1954 AAA and two-time USAC National Driving Champion posted 54 top-10 finishes in 72 Indy car events, but perished in a June 19, 1960 accident at Langhorne, Pa.

Carter was present at the 1955 meeting when USAC was created as a replacement sanctioning body for the departing AAA. A race driver of tremendous accomplishment, he became USAC's first competition director Jan. 1, 1956, holding that position until 1959 when he returned to the cockpit.

Eleven Indianapolis 500 starts yielded four top-10 finishes but it was as a respected official where Carter had a profound impact on the history of the United States Auto Club. A member of the Auto Racing Hall of Fame and National Sprint Car and Midget Halls of Fame, Carter passed away May 7, 1993 but his immediate family extended to successful USAC racing sons Pancho and Dana. One of his most notable racing victories came in a 500-lap midget race at the Los Angeles Coliseum in 1947.

Foyt owns more USAC National feature victories than anyone in history – 154 – spanning a variety of disciplines. Universally recognized as one of the best, if not the best, driver in American motor racing history, Foyt's accomplishments in some 40 years of competition are legendary. Four times a winner of the Indianapolis 500, he is the only driver to win the 500, the Daytona 500 (1972), the 24 Hours of Daytona and the 24 Hours of Le Mans. He also won the IROC title in 1976 and 1977 and he has been inducted in a number of Halls of Fame, too numerous to mention here.

A current Indy car owner, he won the 1999 Indianapolis 500 as an owner with driver Kenny Brack. His USAC career began in 1956 and he earned his first USAC win the following year. Seven times a USAC National Champion in Indy cars, Foyt also owns three titles in Stock Cars (1968, 1978 and 1979) and was USAC's 1972 Dirt Track Champion. His 35 consecutive starts at Indy are an all-time record as are his 13 races led and 4,909 laps completed. His 67 wins continue to lead all Indy car drivers and he is the only driver to win the Indianapolis 500 in both front-engined and rear-engined cars. Hulman, a businessman from Terre Haute who rescued the Indianapolis Motor Speedway from disrepair in the 1940s and restored it to the prominence it had maintained in prior years, is considered as the founder of USAC and through the Indianapolis 500 helped maintain USAC's position as a leader in the motorsports industry until his death on October 27, 1977.

Through Hulman and Company, he oversaw the Clabber Girl company and his passion for the sport of auto racing was passed along to his grandson, Tony George, who not only served as president of IMS for many years but with the assistance of USAC, was instrumental in the formation of the Indy Racing League, which debuted in 1996. Hulman purchased the Speedway from Eddie Rickenbacker and hired three-time 500 winner Wilbur Shaw as the track's president. Shaw perished in a 1954 air accident and Hulman assumed the president's role at that time. Rose-Hulman Institute in Terre Haute bears his name in recognition of his dedication to higher education and philanthropy. McCluskey was a race driver who earned championships in USAC Indy cars (1973), stock cars (1969 and 1970) and sprint cars (1963 and 1966).

More than 50 victories in USAC competition included one in the Ontario (Calif.) 500 (1972) and in his final Indy car start at Milwaukee, Wis., in 1979. His 18 Indianapolis 500 appearances included a third-place finish in 1973. In 1967 at the 24 Hours of LeMans McCluskey is credited with a possible live-saving effort at extracting Mario Andretti from his seriously crashed car.

After his 1979 Milwaukee triumph McCluskey decided to join USAC in an official capacity and his tenure as executive vice president and competition director earned him the respect of the entire auto racing fraternity. He was responsible for numerous innovative decisions, including the inauguration of the popular Rookie Orientation Program at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. He died Aug. 29, 1993 after a bout with cancer.

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