Brad Bradford & Jim Bradford – 2014 Kossuth County Racing Hall of Fame Inductees

By Chad Meyer

Three generations of Bradford’s have helped racing in North Iowa run smoothly since the early 1960’s. The late Brad Bradford was the first to bring a wrecker to the Algona track in 1964, when he worked at Dau’s garage.

In the early 1970’s Dau’s opted to not bring wrecker equipment to the local track. Brad and his son Jim built their own wrecker out of a GMC pickup truck and brought it to the speedway.

“You couldn’t miss that old GMC. Dad painted it multi-colored,” said Jim. “He always had to be painting something, it was just the way he was.”

According to Jim, his father painted race cars for several area drivers, including Gene Schattschneider, Wayne Meyer and Darreld Bunkofske. Brad, Jim plus Darrell Wubben and Dave Hanselman helped Schattschneider build his Chevy II race car.

In addition to providing the wrecker at the Algona track, Brad and Jim stayed busy in their shop. Jim and three others bought a race car and worked on it at Brad’s shop. The engine for the car was built as a class project while Jim was attending Iowa Lakes Community College’s automotive school.

As a driver, Jim raced the car at Algona. When he joined the Air National Guard, he put Bud Peterson behind the wheel, who drove the car to multiple feature wins.

Brad and Jim provided the wreckers for Algona and then the Belmond track when Dan and Sandy Danielson ran that track. Brad also helped work on the track and served as flagman for several years there.

“Belmond was so much fun,” says Jim. “It seemed we pumped more water off that track than we ever put back on it.”

Jim enjoyed flagging the races, but after getting hit in the mouth with debris from a car, he decided it was about time to step away. “I flagged those last two or three shows that year wearing a catcher’s mask. I got some grief over that, but we had a lot of fun with it too,” he said.

Brad got out of the wrecker business in the late 1980’s, but continued to ride along to the track with son Jim. Jim stayed busy when track promoter Daryl Brayton operated the track, helping out with track preparation during the week, and running the wrecker on race night.

When Joe Ringsdorf took over the Algona track, Jim continued providing the wreckers, and as Ringsdorf added more tracks, Jim and his son Billy joined in.

Jim says, “At one point we were helping out at four area tracks. We’d go to Britt Friday, Algona on Saturday and then to Mason City on Sunday’s.”

“Joe’s first night in Spencer, he didn’t have any wreckers that showed up so we had to hurry over there. That’s how we ended up in Spencer.”

Jim says the reason they’ve helped out as long as they have is respect for the racers. “It’s our privilege to help them out. We enjoy it, and we get to watch some racing when we’re not busy.”

Today, Billy and his family continue the Bradford tradition at the Britt, Algona, Spencer tracks.

Jim and his wife Linda moved to Oskaloosa, IA a few years ago. Jim says he couldn’t stay away from racing though. “I drive back to this area three days a week to help Billy in the shop and run the wreckers at the track. Some of the best racing in Iowa is here and my granddaughter often rides with me at the track.”

Brad Bradford passed away in August of 2010.

***The late Brad Bradford and his son Jim are 2014 inductees into the Kossuth County Racing Hall of Fame.***