

Bill Spoerle

The Keeneland Concours lost one
of its most ardent supporters and
dear friend Bill Spoerle
on November 4, 2014



Sitting with the famous 1911 Benz 150HP Grand Prix racer, Bill Spoerle was an integral part of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum.

Some may not have known the 80-year old who was a fixture in the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Foundation's restoration department since 1963. That's because Bill was never one to personally seek fame or be on display during the famed Memorial Day weekend festivities. But while he was content to stay behind the scenes, his work was always in the spotlight since almost every car showcased on race days through the years had his personal touch.

Bill was born in Jagstfeld, Germany, where he studied mechanical engineering. After graduation, he worked for NSU, which is now Audi, in its European Grand Prix Motorcycle Racing Division. At the urging of legendary motorcycle racer, Floyd "Pop" Dreyer, Bill immigrated to the United States in 1956 to work at Dreyer's BMW motorcycle dealership in Indianapolis. It was during this time that he met Dreyer's daughter, Mary, who would ultimately become his wife for the next 53 years. In 1959, Bill became the chief mechanic for race car driver Elmer George, Tony Hulman's son-in-law, until 1963 when Hulman established the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum and hired Bill to be one of its restorationists.

From that day forward, all of the historically significant automobiles in the Speedway's inventory were expertly cared for under Bill's supervision. Over the years, he

restored Duesenbergs, Maseratis, Lotuses and worked on the Miller race car that three-time Indianapolis 500 winner Louis Meyer drove to victory in 1928.

He was known on the racing circuit as a kind and generous man. He was a perfectionist, demanding much from those who worked with him, but no more than he expected from himself. Anyone fortunate enough to have worked alongside him gained an education that went beyond what could be learned in a classroom. The shop was truly his domain. He never retired and worked until his death, "not because he had to, just because he wanted to," mused his son, Kurt.

At the inaugural Keeneland Concours in 2004, organizers convinced the Speedway to exhibit an extremely rare March Porsche Indy racing car from its museum. Bill Spoerle personally brought the car to Lexington in a trailer, no doubt feeling the weight of responsibility for "his" car. Jim Levenson, Director of Car Acquisitions, had never met this quiet, unassuming man, but soon learned from automotive circles that Bill was the master of cars at the museum and nothing came or went without his knowledge and approval. Over the years, Jim and Bill developed an intimate friendship that went beyond Concours-related work. It became one of mutual respect from two friends whose love and appreciation for the automotive world knew no boundaries.



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Now, in its 12th year, the Keeneland Concours has been fortunate to have displayed many of the museum's collections. In appreciation, we would like to dedicate this 2015 event program in Bill's honor. He will be greatly missed. We only hope he's gone to a place where he can find yet another racing engine whose carburetors need to be rebuilt.

– By Jim Levenson and Sue Entwisle